Industrial Worker

DECEMBER 1996 #1596, vol. 93 no. 12 $1.00/50 p EDUCATION ORGANIZATION EMANCIPATION

K-Jack workers demand to be paid

The K-Jack workers who walked off their job over grievances reported in our July and August issues are still out on strike. K-Jackhas had so much difficulty recruiting and keeping the handful of scabs maintaining a semblance of production that it is being obliged to pay the scabs in cash (one of the strikers' grievances is K-Jack's refusal to pay their wages) and provide door-to-door transportation.

K-Jack makes newspaper vending machines in Gardena, California, for papers including *Barron's, Detroit Free Press, Houston Chronicle, La Opinion, San Diego Union-Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle,* and the *Toronto Star.* K-Jack's largely immigrant workers struck July 2 in response to bouncing pay checks, unsanitary and unsafe working conditions, and an incident in which workers were locked in the plant for unscheduled and unpaid overtime.

Now 28 workers have filed suit against K-Jack, owner Jack Chalabian, and several affiliated companies demanding payment of their unpaid wages, and damages for minimum wage violations, false imprisonment and other unlawful acts. K-Jack replied with a frivolous suit claiming workers had interfered with its operations by demanding to be paid for their labor and persuading their fellow workers to do the same.

The 28 workers are owed $30,691.25 in back pay for work done between April and June 1996, in addition to interest and other damages and an additional 30 days' wages (the penalty set by California law for wages that go unpaid for more than one month).

The IWW's Los Angeles General Membership Branch is continuing to assist these workers in their efforts to secure their wages and bring Chalabian to justice.

Protestors fined $1 million

An Idaho jury has ordered 12 Earth First! members to pay a contractor $1.15 million for demonstrations which delayed the destruction of old growth forests in northern Idaho. The defendants will appeal, citing the absence of any evidence linking them to alleged equipment destruction and jury bias. Earth First! organizer Karen Pickett said the verdict was intended to intimidate protestors, but pledged to continue "as long as they're roading and logging in the wilderness... We're there for the long term."

In This Issue...

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Rank-and-file demands General Strike...

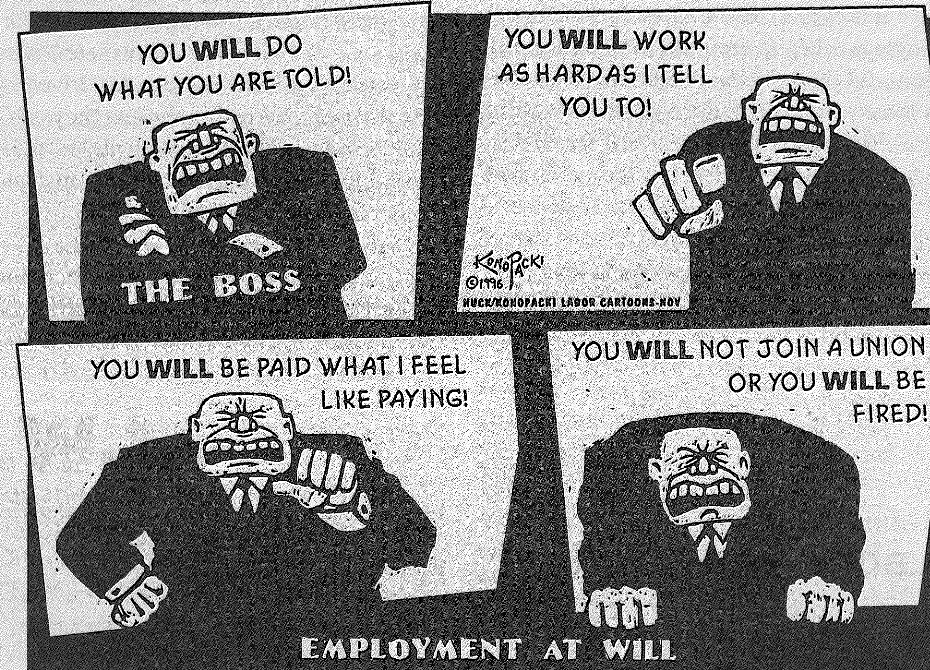
Toronto Days of Action

Walking up Bay Street at about 1:30 p.m. on October 25th I got the best news I'd heard in years – the IWW Banner had been raised on the floor of the Toronto Stock Exchange! The newspapers may have been filled with news of 300 workplaces being picketed and the streets nearlyemptied as up to 1,000,000 stayed away from work but the raising of the Wobbly standard stated what most of us were after in clear language.

The Toronto Days of Action began October 16th with a forum oneducation and ended October 27th with a multifaith service. Demonstrations, civil disobedience, ringing of church bells, a hunger breakfast, vigils, forums and workshops were organized by groups as diverse as the Ontario Federation of Students, the Red Cross, Toronto Action for Social Change, Oxfam, FoodShare, Critical Mass, AntiRacist Action, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and Black Creek Community Focus. This diverse coalition of groups was made possible with the assistance of the right-wing conservative government which has managed to destroy in 18 months what generations of activists had achieved.

I managed to catch a wide spectrum of events during the week of action, some mainstream and some quite radical.

On Monday the 21st I delivered a batch of petitions calling on the legislative assembly to remove the premier from office to two of our more senior activists. Such petitions are pretty tame, but the Ontario Omnibus Alliance which is circulating the petition is also supporting a province-wide general strike to drive the premier (equivalent of a U.S. governor) from office.



On Wednesday the 23rd I provided jail support for ten people arrested for planting a symbolic garden on the lawns of the Ontario legislature. Three were held overnight and all will appear in court again December 5th to set a date for trial. The accused are charged with mischief causing up to $5,000 worth of damage for dumping soil under the window of the premier and planting wheat and Jerusalem artichokes in it.

These two actions were symbolic of the range of activities endorsed by the Metro Days of Action Committee. They were community-based grassroots responses to the actions of a government bent on destroying our society. All these actions, from a nurses rally to a tent city, helped show the strength of opposition to Harris & Co.

Friday, October 25th, began Thursday evening with pickets at a number of worksites including Canada Post. By 5:00 a.m. pickets were up at about 300 sites across Metro Toronto. The Toronto Transit Commission was shut down! A massive sit-in around Queen's Park prevented legislative workers from going to work. At Toronto City Hall, Mayor Barb Hall who voted for an injunction prohibiting any form of effective picketing, was kept out of her office for over an hour and a half and only the intervention of a union hack got her into her office.

My day began at 9:00 a.m. when my son and I went walking in our neighbourhood. ARA had a picket going at the home

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Six Months and Still Furious!

National Day of Action to Reinstate IWW Activist Miriam Fried

The IWW's picket of Borders Books and its affiliates (Waldenbooks, Brentano's and Planet Music) are now a six-month-long example of how far a company will go to crush workers' organizing, and how a small but committed union can present a formidable opposition.

December 15, 1966 will be a national day of action to demand reinstatement for Miriam Fried. Miriam is a Wobbly organizer fired by Center City Philadelphia's Borders on June 15, 1996. Although her work record was sterling and she was well respected by her peers, Miriam was vindictively fired for her activities in a narrowly defeated IWW union drive. December 15th marks the six-month anniversary of Miriam's firing.

Borders Books has consistently attacked our campaign to expose their trampling of workers' rights by pointing out how "progressive" their company is – how they sponsor events for organizations on the political left, people of color, sexual minorities and the arts community. This convenient disguise – *the company of conscience* – has been blown away time and time again by IWW activists and Borders employees, who insist that the first measure of a company is how their workers are treated.

Borders insists that it has an "open door" policy for their employees to voice their concerns. The "open door" was slammed in the face of Miriam Fried when she challenged cash register policies. Geri Harkin-Tucker, a worker in Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill Borders, was reprimanded for discussing wages with fellow employees on her own time.

Borders desperately tries to maintain that it pays its workers better than other bookstores. The money that Borders has squandered to fight our all-volunteer effort to protect the rights of workers could easily be used for pay increases and improving working conditions. We estimate that for every dollar that we spend in Philadelphia, Borders is spending about $100,000. Their key executives have criss-crossed the United States to placate their workers. Borders Group Inc. has retained the notorious union-busting law firm of Jackson Lewis (page 150 in *Confessions of a Union Buster*) to do battle with the legal expertise of two 20-something-year-old Wobblies. IWW organizer Bob Helms recently suggested in

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Readers' Soapbox

An Injury to One...

The struggles against those corrupted creatures of Borders called bosses, and the struggle for the dignity of Miriam Fried – and of of you all – has proven the wisdom of the words: "An injury to one is an injury to all." It is only by never losing sight of this sound truth that it becomes possible to rebuild a strong and assertive IWW and for the workers of the world to gain self-confidence in their ability to build society anew without bosses and parasites – with their own efforts, and according to their own needs.

It is easy to say, what does the fate of a single worker matter when there are millions out there facing conditions far worse; it is easy to ridicule an organization calling itself the Industrial Workers of the World, yet spending so much effort trying to make a quite modest claim on behalf of one individual, still it is only by seeing each one of us as important that the foundations for a new society can be laid, and it is through this practice others will join the struggle. It is on this very same foundation the struggle of the Merseyside dockers is waged.

For a World without Bosses,

Harald Beyer-Arnesen
Oslo, Norway

Labor Party Folly

Are we dumb? Have we learned nothing? I can't believe you folks lent credence to the U.S. Labor Party by giving it an article in the *Industrial Worker* (October '96, page 9). If the history of revolutionary syndicalism (and the IWW in particular) has taught us anything, it should be that labor parties' only objective is to dilute the energy of the labor movement away from direct action nd organizing by soliciting support for self-serving politicians more interested in their personal political ambitions than in the class struggle.

This is especially true with the U.S. Labor Party, which I have found to also be infiltrated with Communist Party members (CPUSA and other factions) with their own ambitions of dominating working people. Every self-styled left-wing party in California (Peace & Freedom, Greens, etc.) is so splintered by competing factions driven by personal political ambitions that they can't even function, let alone bring about social change. The communists have fractured into competing political cults.

History will bear out my position in the U.S., England, etc. There is a lot of literature which described successful syndicalist-style labor organizing and shows how the workers were sold out by Socialist, Labor and Social Democratic politicians who sided with business and the ruling class. This is a no-brainer. Let us focus on organizing and direct action. The only attention labor parties deserve is to laugh at them for their asininity.

Scott Rittenhouse
Los Angeles

Editor's Note: *The short item in question reported a Labor Party resolution blasting Clinton and the Democrats for trying to "restore... the forced labor of the workhouse..." I believe that most Labor Party members are sincere, if mistaken, in their efforts.*

While some IWW members are active in the Labor Party, our constitution bars the IWW and its branches from endorsing political parties, recognizing that such political affiliations undermine industrial unity and thus impede the organization of One Big Union capable of our emancipation.

Al Gore crosses picket line

On Oct. 30, members of IATSE Local 675, a number of whom are also Wobblies, picketed the speech of Republicrat Vice-Presidential candidate Al Gore in Eugene, Oregon, over the use of non-union stagehands to set up equipment and staging for the event. The non-union stagehands were reportedly students being paid a nominal sub-minimum stipend for the event.

The picket proved a success; union members were hired to tear down the stage and equipment after the event. It also seemed to drive home a point about who our friends are to a large number of union folks who were attending the event, by showing them that the Democrats aren't quite the friends of workers they purport to be.

Perhaps one of the most telling signs of the Demos' true alliances came when some yuppie scum in an overpriced suit told fellow worker Rick George and I that we should "get a job."

With friends like these......

Dennis Soper
X345088

Industrial Worker

THE VOICE OF REVOLUTIONARY UNIONISM

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I.W.W. DIRECTORY

Job Branch= 5 or more members in workplace
GMB=General Membership Branch
IU=Industrial Union Del=Delegate
GOC= Organizing Committee.

IU 330: Building Construction Workers
IU 450: Print & Publishing House Workers
IU 460: Food Processing Workers
IU 510: Marine Transport Workers
IU 610: Health Service Workers
IU 620: Education Workers
IU 630: Entertainment Workers
IU 660: General Distribution Workers
IU 670: Public Service Workers

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Toronto Group– Joe Chang, 137 Roncesvalles Suite 208, M6R 2L2 416/539-0780. Meets 1st Thurs 7 pm; phone for location.

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Oxford branch– c/o Oxford Claimants and Unemployed Workers Union, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford
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Sierra Leone– Del.: Bright Chikezi, 22 Wellington Street, Freetown.

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Mendocino– Bill Meyers, del. 707/884-1818.
San Diego Group– PO Box 907, San Diego 92112-0907. 619/284-WOBS
Santa Cruz GMB– PO Box 534, 95061
IU450 New Earth Press Job Shop– 1921 Ashby Berkeley 94703 510/549-0176
UCB Recyclers/Compost IU620 Job Shop – 504 Eshleman Berkely 94720 510/642-4895. del.s: Cathy Brennan, Charles Long
Integrated Switching & Networks TeleCommunications Collective, IU560 – 1442-A Walnut St. #344, Berkeley 94709 510/883-6960 gata@iww.org del.s: Michelle Barnes, Deke Nihilson
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Long Haul Resource Center, 3124 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley 94705. 510/845-0540. GMB meets 3rd Saturdays at Long Haul, 1:30 p.m., Open delegates meeting 1st Saturdays at Long Haul, 1:30 p.m. General Organizing Committee meets 4th Saturdays at San Francisco office. GDC meets as needed contact: 510/549-0358.

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IU450 P&L Printing Job Shop– 2298 Clay, Denver 80211. 303/433-1852

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Honaunau Group – POB 868, Honaunau 96726.

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IU630 GOC– Jim Barclay, 75A Elm St. Worcester 01609
Boston Area GMB & Education Workers IU 620– PO Box 391724, Cambridge 02139. del: Steve Kellerman 617/469-5162 Meets 2nd Sunday of each month at 2 p.m. at Lucy Parsons Center, Central Square, Cambridge.
Pioneer Valley Group– PO Box 154, Northampton 01061, e-mail: pviww@iww.org del: Mike D'Amore 413/549-1143

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Minneapolis-St. Paul– 7315 Dupont Ave. S., Richfield 55423-3025. 612/869-4139.

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Capital District Group– POB 74, Altamont 12009. 518/861-5627.
Rochester– Del: Ric Garren, 716/232-4005.
NYC GMB– Del: Wade Rawluk, 5610 Netherland Ave #4D, Bronx 10471. 718/796-3671.
Rochelle Semel, RD 1 Box 158-B, Hartwick 13348. 607/293-6489.

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IU660 Wooden Shoe Books Records Job Shop– 112 S. 20th St. 19103. 215/569-2477.

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Burlington Branch– c/o Thomas Jordan or Deborah Ormsbee, POB 1004, Williston 05495. 802/482-4601 or 863-0571 nfnena@igc.apc.org

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Industrial Transportation Project– Arthur Miller, POB 5464, Tacoma 98415-0464
Puget Sound GMB– P.O. Box 4814 Seattle 98104-0814 206/935-9012

WISCONSIN

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Madison GMB– c/o Lakeside. Del: Jerry Chernow

WYOMING

Jackson– Teton Jack Langan, del., POB 4056, 89001. 307/733-4553

War Zone Wobbly Meeting

Around Our Union

On October 26, a dozen IWW members met in Champaign, Illinois, to discuss the prospects for building the union in the "War Zone." The War Zone is the area in central Illinois surrounding Decatur, which has been the scene of many employer attacks on working people, the A.E. Staley lockout in particular. The handful of Wobblies living in the Decatur area were joined by members from the St. Louis, Chicago, and Southeast Michigan branches, as well as IWW General Secretary Fred Chase. The Wobblies from the midwestern branches discussed what they were doing in their local areas and gave suggestions for how a branch might be built in central Illinois.

A top item on the agenda was the union-wide campaign to get IWW organizer Miriam Fried her job back at Borders. Miriam Fried was fired during an IWW organizing drive at Borders Bookstore in Philadelphia, on a trumped up charge, in an effort by management to bust the drive. The IWW has been conducting a nationwide effort to pressure the Borders chain to reinstate Miriam. St. Louis and Southeast Michigan Wobblies told about tactics they are using in their area. GST Chase discussed the upcoming 6-month anniversary of Miriam's firing and urged everyone to conduct appropriate commemorations at a Borders bookstore near them on December 15, if Miriam has not been reinstated by then.

The Borders drive brought up the issue of how to improve IWW organizing in general. The midwestern Wobblies agreed to host a four day training session for IWW organizers next summer. Subjects mentioned for workshops included worker rights, labor laws, media, employer research, direct action strategy, and anticipatory role-playing. Instructors will be sought from around the union, and all IWW branches will be invited to attend. A committee was formed to organize the event.

Labor media was the next item on the agenda. It was generally agreed that the IWW could do a better job of getting the word out about organizing drives, conflicts, and what the union is about. The *Industrial Worker* was considered to be a good resource, but suffers from poor distribution. It was suggested that members buy a bundle of *Workers* and then leave them where prospective members might pick them up for free. The St. Louis Branch has been active in making labor videos and will be making their catalog of tapes available to the rest of the union. Fellow worker Ron Sakolsky, a central Illinois wobbly, has been researching micro-radio, and will be making information on small power radio broadcasting available. Fellow worker Barb Pliskow (Southeast Michigan) is setting up a voluntary publicity committee to help coordinate some of the union's public outreach efforts.

Finally, before adjourning, the occasion was used to discuss the IWW's ongoing financial crisis. All agreed that the union can not afford to let financial problems cripple the IWW, especially during the present growth period. A joint recommendation was made to the rest of the union:

"We, the IWW members attending the October 26th Wobbly Zone Conference, feel that additional funds should be raised instead of shutting down IWW Headquarters or the *Industrial Worker.* Delegates should make sure that members paying sub-minimum and minimum dues are eligible to do so. Branches have a duty to cover the per member costs of serving their members (approximately $9.00 a month), either through dues or additional fund-raising."

The meeting adjourned to a nearby Mexican restaurant before participants departed for their homes. Everyone felt that the meeting had been positive and constructive. Perhaps a new IWW presence will be felt in the War Zone in the near future.

Charges dropped on Ann Arbor Wobs

Charges have been dismissed against 12 protesters arrested last December on trespass charges at the University of Michigan winter commencement. The protesters, five of whom were Wobblies, began singing Solidarity Forever when scab *Detroit Free Press* publisher Neil Shine was introduced to be presented with an honorary degree.

The demonstrators were outraged that the University would choose to honor someone representing a company which has now kept some 2,700 workers out on the streets for 16 months. There were suspicions that some of the plainclothes cops involved in the arrests may have been from Vance Security, the scab herders in the employ of the Detroit Newspaper Agency, working in collusion with the campus cops. The protesters had hoped to explore that collusion if the case had come to trial.

Charges were dropped on the basis that the activity was protected free speech.

Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. **Between these two classes** a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interests of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system." **It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism.** The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with the capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.



Edinburgh Wobs marched in the annual Miners Gala earlier this year.

Building the IWW in Scotland

At their 9 October meeting, Edinburgh Wobs approved a new organising leaflet aimed at health workers, made arrangements to distribute 2,000 copies of an education workers organising leaflet, and agreed to organise a benefit for the Mersey dockers.

IWW members are considering establishing an Edinburgh District Industrial Council to coordinate efforts among members of different IWW industrial union and job branches in the area, assist organising efforts in different workplaces, and eventually pose an alternative to the moribund Trades Council.

The Edinburgh IWW began in September 1994 with a single member, who distributed an IWW leaflet critical of EIS (a business union in education) spinelessness. A few months later, four IWW education workers distributed a 'Be Realistic... Demand Something' leaflet at local colleges, prompting a counter-leaflet from an EIS official. College administrators scheduled a meeting with our fellow workers to complain about the IWW leaflet and informing that that no college facilities could be used for IWW purposes, and that they themselves (our members) were college facilities. EIS officials indicated their willingness to go along with this management ban, but Wobblies continued organising nonetheless.

In Spring 1995, IWW members at Stevenson College posted a Notice to College Management signed by 50 workers pledging immediate strike action if announced lay-offs went forward. The IWW's determined stance resulted in three more members joining at Stevenson, and several others elsewhere.

Stevenson Wobs launched a newsletter in September 1995. In November, a boycott of the canteen brought in more members at Stevenson, while unemployed members distributed leaflets against cutbacks in jobless benefits. In February and May 1996, Edinburgh Wobs organised benefits for Mersey dockers which raised £125.

Over the past two years, these persistent efforts have built the Edinburgh IWW from one to 22 members, and still growing.

Hawaii Wobs still lining 'em up

The O'ahu GMB is continuing its organizing efforts among Grad Assistants at the university, as well as among workers in two shops not related to the campus. Hawaii Wobs are also walking picketlines at Borders and on two solidarity pickets — HERE Local 5 at a local theatre owned by the Wallace chain and UNITE's campaign against Guess? for its use of sweatshops. They are also experiencing a growth in membership on the Big Island and now have two delegates there.

IWW ballots in field

Ballots for the Fall 1996 IWW election are in the field, and should have been received all members in good standing. If your ballot has not arrived, please contact your delegate or IWW headquarters immediately, as ballots must be returned by December 7.

The issues include election of the 1997 General Executive Board, General Secretary-Treasurer and *Industrial Worker* editor; selection of a site for the 1997 General Assembly (St. Louis or Boston); two proposals to increase dues (one to 1 percent of monthly income; the other to $5, $10 and $15, by income); authorizing Regional Organizing Committees outside the U.S. to set local dues; permitting advertising in the *Industrial Worker;* and authorization to tap Nelson funds to cover IWW operations.

Commemorating IWW Down Under

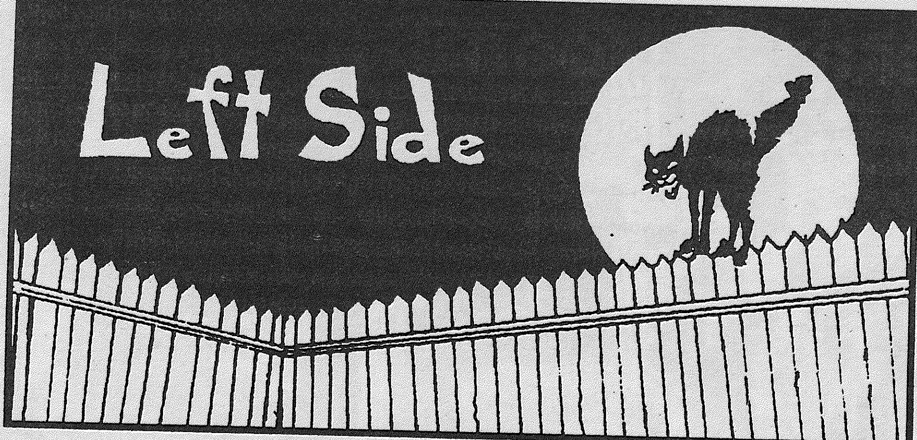
On December 4th 1916 12 IWW activists were jailed on sentences ranging from five to fifteen years as part of the Australian government's efforts to crush the union. All were pardoned within four years of commencing their sentences. The Libertarian Workers for a Self-Managed Society will sponsor a commemoration Dec. 4 at 8 pm at the Ross House (247 Flinders Lane) in Melbourne. Phil McCory will speak on the I.W.W. twelve and the IWW.

Workers Helpline Organisation Aberystwyth

Wobblies in Aberystwyth, Wales, are setting up demonstration stalls to publicise the Workers Helpline and alert workers to their rights. FW Bob Mander reports that they are getting several calls from workers who have been denied basic labor rights and swindled out of money by their bosses. However, media propaganda has conditioned many British workers into believing that they have no rights, or being too afraid to assert them – a condition the Helpline (01970 624590) hopes to overcome.

1997 Labor History Calendar

The 1997 IWW Labor History Calendar features 14 photos of workers struggles from the 1910s to the 1990s, and hundreds of dates commemorating our history. Single copies are $8.50 each, post-paid, or $5.50 each for five or more copies to the same address. Orders to: IWW Lit. Dept., 103 West Michigan Ave., Ypsilanti MI 48197.



"Own a Hohokam village, 25 acres, includes ruins, irrigation canals and remains of an ancient ball court. Located close to major tourist attraction. $89,000." So reads an ad in the real estate classifieds of a Southwestern paper. The heritage of a few thousand years of human development here in Freedomland is just another bid for the tourist buck. But such is the lot of the original peoples; they are but a means of diversion for the descendants of the invaders.

It's too damn bad that the Mayflower didn't sink on the way over!

Actually, those who belong to the dominant society are not faring much better under our present economic system. The natural resources of Freedomland are not only geographically distanced from the average Freedomland working-stiff, but economically distanced as well. To make matters worse, if powerful anti-environmental forces in Congress have their way there won't be too many of those natural resources left around to enjoy. They have rammed through a budget resolution with the goal of opening up *all* public lands to the possibility of sale to private industry -- for the sake of some fast budget cuts.

They's even tried to establish a National Park Closure Commission that would shut down parks like military bases! However, their proposed giveaway does not end there. Congress is moving to carve up the entire "public" estate, including national forests, wildlife refuges and scenic Bureau of Land Management lands for the benefit of oil, timber and livestock corporations. To add insult to injury, our good pollies claim that this budget balancing is necessary for the sake of future generations. They don't mention whose future generations.

Yes, indeed. It is too damn bad the Mayflower did not sink on the way over!

Now that the election is over and gone we have the big spending spree up ahead where the big commercial interests loosen their belt lops as the rest of us honor the Prince of Peace. We have gotten the chief executive we deserve. Well-deserved, since we allowed the union movement to slip out of our hands over the past couple of decades.

There is not too much of the Union Movement left anymore, and that which is left is having an uphill struggle. The United Farm Workers are still plugging away, however. In a strawberry field in Watsonville, California, organizers made a terrible discovery. Human waste was dumped near the crop and near the farm workers. The stench was so bad that one organizer got sick to the stomach. Such violations by the growers are getting worse every day. The gun-toting overseers have nothing better to do than fondle the women workers. One woman was fondled in the same field where her husband and children were working.

The UFW have put together a report citing hundreds of such violations. But the moment a charge is filed another worker's livelihood is in danger. Such is the outgrowth of the past decades of backsliding on the part of the union movement. But the UFW is not giving up. They are carrying on in the manner of the old Wob harvest organizers. The UFW can use ny help that can be sent them: UFW, PO Box 62, Keene CA 93531. Such gifts are not tax deductible, they will tell you. It figures!

Too damn bad the Mayflower didn't sink!

This past summer the government of Zimbabwe announced it was pessimistic about finding a new hangman to replace its longtime executioneer, a 72-year-old Englishman who recently retired. No local person will take the job because of a national superstition over killing another person without a personal motive. This sounds to your scribe like a very good superstition -- too bad it can't spread. Then the Prince of Peace could really be celebrated.

Of course, we all know that we foot the bill for the high style the profiteer lives in. Not only through the surplus value f our labor, but also our taxes which whatever government happens to be over us uses to further grubstake our exploiters.

Wall Street wheeler-dealer Irwin Jacobs has as one of his current business ventures the refurbishing and repackaging of items that have been returned to retail stores by disgruntled customers. When "Irv the Liquidator," as he is affectionately known, looks at the number of prisoners languishing in Freedomland's rapidly expanding correctional system he sees one thing: cheap labor for his refurbishing business.

Three years ago Jacobs approached prison officials in Minnesota looking to swing a deal permitting him to set up shop in the various joints of that state and hire the prisoners. State officials decided to let the liquidator avail himself of the prison labor provided that his company paid for the space, utilities, maintenance o equipment, janitorial services and security. This did not satisfy Jacobs, and he turned them down.

He therefore set about looking for a state government that could offer better terms. In Wisconsin he found governor Tommy Thompson's auctioneer-like approach to doling out state contracts suitably inviting. He then donated $420,000 to Thompson's 1994 re-election campaign and four of Jacobs' business associates donated an additional $20,000. A new marriage of convenience was thus established.

Having reached this agreement, it goes without saying that the taxpayers of the state of Wisconsin will be footing the bill for installing Irvie's equipment as well as contributing to the plush life-style of their duly-elected chief executive.

With cheap labor being obtained from the prison cells, from across the border factories and overseas sweatshops, more people will be pounding the pavement seeking other means of surviving -- with the result of more prisons being build along with an ever-growing source of inexpensive labor. The employing-class never had it so good.

Tommy Thompson and Irv the Liquidator are taking advantage of the vulnerable position of prisoners in order to undercut the market forces that would ordinarily push wages upward. There are now over a million people in prisons throughout Freedomland. This is something that workers and what unions they have left should take into consideration and shout loud and clear against the exploitation of prison labor for the profit of private companies. (This information was furnished by an inmate of one of the Wisconsin prisons.)

Too damn bad the Mayflower didn't sink!

-- C. C. Redcloud



Free-Market Prosperity?

The *New York Times* recently ran a series on the miserable living conditions endured by many wage slaves in that center of "free enterprise" because their wages are too low to afford even a modest hovel. On October 20 the *New York Times Magazine* weighed in with a long piece on how U.S. workers earning today's low wages cannot afford to both eat and pay the rent. Apparently the editors don't read the paper; a few days later an Oct. 24 cut-line announced that "Free-market prosperity has yet to reach Mongolia."

The article it accompanied reports on unemployed workers eking out a living of sorts by scavenging coal scraps from an abandoned open-pit mine. Even many with jobs earn only about $16 a month. The government response to the crisis is a "free-market" program – throwing thousands of retired workers off the pension rolls, eliminating price controls, and promoting the wonders of unfettered capitalism. Our fellow workers in Mongolia will be starving for quite a long time if they wait for "free-market prosperity" to roll in....

Unspeakable Acts

On my way in to work the other day, I couldn't help noticing the picketline outside the polling place. A line of fellow workers held signs attesting to the miserable conditions inside: "Clinton Gore," one sign read, in an unmistakeable reference to the bloody trail Clinton's re-election campaign has left in Iraq and in thousands of households where children rely on welfare for a roof over their heads and a bite to eat. "Weld Republican" another warned. Even those willing to scurry across picketlines must have been given pause by the horrors cited by the picketers.

I can't attest to this from personal experience, of course, but I'm told those who crossed the line were herded into little booths where they pulled curtains behind them in a furtive attempt to shield their unspeakable acts from public view. They voted for Republicans, they voted for Democrats– They voted... Could a crack house or opium den wreak as much devastation?

A solid majority of the U.S. population honored the picketlines, whether out of principle or revulsion or boredom. So the picketers can take some comfort from that. Yet when all is said and done, the ruling class is still in the saddle and the bosses are laying on the whip as hard as ever. Regardless of what folks do on election day, the urgent task before us remains the same – the need to organize the sort of effective power that can lighten our burden, and ultimately enable us to dump the bosses off our back. That will require organized economic power – and the determination to use it...

Dying From Politics

The AFL-CIO has just mounted the most sustained (and expensive) political campaign in its history, spending well in excess of $100 million on the election – most of it going to folks who would sooner spit on workers than give us the time of day. Eight of 32 targeted Republican House members were defeated, and the Republicans actually picked up seats in the Senate.

Was it money well spent? AFL-CIO President John Sweeney says yes. "A gang of thugs calling themselves members of Congress has been trying to mug the American people for the past two years," Sweeney said. "We fought them to a standstill." Ignoring the fact that a stand-still leaves the thugs in Congress and us on the short end of the stick, the mugging's been going on a hell of a lot longer than two years – and the Democrats who so eagerly take the AFL's money have been at the fore of the attack. (Not all unions agreed with the AFL's spend Democratic strategy – the Laborers Union complained that Gingrich's National Republican Congressional Committee refused to take its members' dues money.)

The bosses cheered Clinton's re-election, taking the stock market to a new record. The AFL-CIO, meanwhile, was so busy politicking that it didn't have time for union work. The October issue of the ILWU's (longshoremen) *Dispatcher*, for example, devoted seven of its eight pages to electioneering – a brief note explained that because of the election coverage, union business would have to be held over. The October *UNITE!* couldn't find space in its 12 pages for a single word of labor news. But that may be just as well; the September issue (in addition to six pages of Democratic Party propaganda) featured yet another story lauding Malden Mills boss Aaron Feuerstein.

As we reported in June, Malden Mills was a Dickensian firetrap and Feuerstein a slave-driving concessions monger. Hundreds of workers lost their jobs, while Feuerstein took advantage of the tragedy to replace his ancient factory with a new, state-of-the-art facility largely paid for by insurance. *UNITE!* prefers to focus on the "spirit of cooperation [that] has been the hallmark of labor-management relations at Malden" since union concessions helped bring the company out of bankruptcy. This same "co-operative" spirit led UNITE to turn a blind eye to the unsafe conditions in the plant (making the fire possible in the first place) and to assist Feuerstein in his efforts over the years to rob workers to line his own pockets. As workers "cooperate" our way into the poor house, perhaps the AFL had better reconsider its political posture – after all, the Democrats fought Gingrich's proposal to re-establish these warehouses for destitute workers.

Spread the Word

FW Ron Kaminkow, in a letter in the current *Labor Notes,* reminds readers that "another fine labor paper exists. The Industrial Worker... consistently provides a broad array of news, opinion and commentary from a militant, direct action, anti-bureaucratic perspective." Unfortunately, the capitalists are reluctant to circulate this sort of information through the boss press or through the corporate distributors who stock most news stands. So if this newspaper is to reach your fellow workers, it's up to you to get it to them – whether by handing it to them yourself or by arranging with local stores to carry the paper on consignment.

We need to reach new readers, both to spread the Wobbly gospel and to reduce the deficits that dog our efforts. Let us know if you think you'd like to try distributing a bundle. If the paper's proving useful in your organzing wor, consider buying a press stamp next time you pay your dues or a contribution to the sustaining fund. And if there's a fight in your area that might interest your fellow workers (a direct action campaign, a wobble, or whatever) why not write it up and send it in.

— Jon Bekken

"There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop. And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all."

Mario Savio, 1943 - 1996



Russian Workers Need One Big Union Solidarity

Millions of workers participated Nov. 6 in a one-day protest strike against unpaid wage arrears. So what?

The FNPR, the Rosemary's baby of the old official trade unions, called for the so-called "day of protest". An anemic crowd of 10-15,000 gathered in Moscow and in general participation in the action was passive. While there were rather active crowds in the Donbass region and in Novosibirsk, the Moscow crowd could be considered pathetic when the issues at stake are examined.

Wage arrears total 43 trillion roubles ($7.9 billion). Many workers haven't been paid in months, the average worker earns a sub-subsistence salary and back salaries will probably never be paid.

Why on earth hasn't there been a general strike – or at least some wildcat actions?

The answer is in some of the peculiarities of the system. The main problem of course is corruption. Although only part of the wage arrears is owed by the federal or local governments, workers must demand that the state handle all this because the directors of different industries are often installed by the state, pay bribes to the state to stay in power and steal money with the collusion of their government cronies. There is nowhere for workers to turn because everyone in the government is corrupt and they have no legal means of redress. (One man who tried to take the Moscow city government to international court in Sweden was simply gunned down the other day.)

The only thing that workers can do to win their claims would be to take radical action, probably including overthrowing the government and expropriating property. (Even then, all the capital is hidden abroad.) Of course the trade union leaders won't tolerate such talk. The FNPR takes part in the tri-partite commission with the government. They signed Yeltsin's accord and generally are the worst types of career bureaucrats. Relatively few independent workers movements have emerged, and when they do they are powerless against the government as the majority of workers are either in the official union or the AFL-CIA unions and there is no mass working-class solidarity.

The IWW will start working here soon and, although it is in no big position to lead mass strikes, it can offer something totally unique and useful to the workers' movement. First of all, it offers no compromise with the capitalist system, which should set it apart from most other unions which are pro-market. Second, in stark contrast to the other unions which exist, it will be run by activists, not by corrupt professional politicians. Well, this is of the greatest importance here – to start with a small group who can create an experience where they work together, I especially hope in some workplace together.

Of course, everything will be an uphill battle – because the police won't readily allow pickets, because there are no democratic traditions, because there is so much poverty and unemployment that when anyone has a paying job, they're afraid to take action, because of government harassment and so forth. But there are very clear things to do, for example, to distribute information on the rights of workers which nobody understands. (Probably 80 to 90 percent of contracts with workers are illegal.) Somebody has to start addressing the rights of workers in the private sector, because they are often not paid as well, but none of this is counted in the wage arrears. Also, it is common for companies, including some well-known multi-nationals, to make workers work overtime without pay and to employ sex discrimination at the job. (Tomorrow for example is a holiday and I personally know three people who will work, and although they should be paid double for this, they won't get a dime, just like they work 60 hour weeks for 40 hours pay. They are too afraid to stick up for their rights because they need to put bread on the table.) The trade unions completely ignore these people, even though in many places they, as well as self-employed people, are beginning to outnumber all other workers. Finally, there needs to be an organization which will not collaborate with the corrupt government and which will give people vital experience in self-organization.

Down with the union bureaucrats. Long live self-management!

— Akai, Moscow

Slave Labor

Labor Notes reports that a federal prisoner in Florida is demanding $20,000 back pay for his work in a prison factory. Terry Greenberg says he should have been paid minimum wage. Nation-wide, prison workers average about 40 cents an hour.

Industrial Worker Sustaining Fund

Andrew Gilson, Alexandria VA	$10
Mike Madore, Boston MA	10
Jim Giddings, Greenville NH	10
Nicholas Topping, Milwaukee WI	20
Obo Help, San Francisco CA	30

Utah Phillips Solidarity Fund

Marianne Edain, Langley WA	$10
Jim Giddings, Greenville NH	25

Many thanks, fellow workers, for your generous support.

from the desk of...

IT'S the end of another year. My second term is behind me. It looks like a third is coming up. We're having a little difficulty finding other Wobblies crazy enough to take this job. The ballots are in the field and the results will be known a month from now. Unless there's a sudden upsurge of support for "write-in," I'll still be plugging away at the mess on my desk come January. Hopefully some other Wobblies will be giving serious thought to taking over this chair come January of '98. Maybe they'll even be efficient enough to find the time to oil the chair so it no longer squeaks every time they shift position. That's a physical shift in position, not political. For better or worse my positions on the issues haven't changed much over the past two years.

If my reading of IWW history is correct, only one Wob has held the position of GST for more than three years. While I admire that person's stamina, I don't share it. Our constitution strongly discourages dynasties. An individual can only run for a fourth consecutive annual term if there are less than three other eligible candidates. In that case the number of terms served by the incumbent candidate must be stated on the ballot, allowing the membership to consider whether it is more advisable to continue the same person in office for an extended period of time, or to rotate the position among the membership in a Union in which we strive to make all members leaders rather than fostering the leader/follower division exemplified in the AFL-CIO unions.

The last two years have been memorablc for me and generally good for the Union. Membership has increased by 73%. New branches have come into existence in Duluth, St. Louis, Boston, Vermont, Eugene Oregon, and Cape May County New Jersey. Portland Oregon meets the requirements for a branch any time they choose to apply for a charter. Groups in western Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Texas only need to sign up a couple more members each to become branches as well. There are also stirrings in Tennessee and Louisianna. Internationally we have our first members in Germany and Japan in a good while, and our first ever to my knowledge in Sierra Leone, West Africa. We seem to have learned some lessons about uniting to fight our common enemy, the bosses, rather than wasting energy bickering among ourselves. It's a lesson which has promoted substantial growth.

I think we can be proud of our ongoing campaign to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the journalist on death row in Pennsylvania under circumstances reminiscent of those which led to the execution of Joe Hill and Sacco and Vanzetti. More and more people are becoming aware that we still exist. The efforts of some Fellow Workers in establishing a presence for the IWW and the *Industrial Worker* on the internet have played an important role in putting new technology to work for organizing. The ongoing campaign to obtain justice for Fellow Worker Miriam Fried in her struggle with Borders Inc. has both gotten us international publicity and demonstrated once again that we take seriously the slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all."

We've picked up a couple of new shops. Wobblies continue to struggle for recognition at a site in Seattle. Solidarity activities for workers engaged in struggles like that against Gannett and Knight-Ridder publishers are ongoing.

WE move into our 92nd year with strong prospects for continued growth and increasing success. The only stumbling block in sight is that bugaboo of all progressive non-profit organizations: finances. I'm the 5th GST functioning with benefit of sizeable bequests from fellow workers who died in the '80s. That money is running out. Without some substantial ongoing fundraising, the next GST will be a volunteer for a bare-bones operation. If fundraising efforts succeed, I expect that we will continue to flurish. If not, I expect that we will survive. Our message is too important to die for lack of money.

I wish all of you and the IWW a happy and prosperous new year. Once again in '97 I look forward to seeing you on the picket line.

— Fred Chase, GST

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Free Distribution by Mail	93	82
Free Distribution Outside the Mail	62	20
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Total Distribution	3,400	3,427
Copies Not Distributed (Office Use)	100	73
Total	3,500	3,500
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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Fred Chase, IWW General Secretary Treasurer, Sept. 7 1996.

For two days the city was ours!

Two "Days of Action" by labour unions and community activists, supported by hundreds of thousands of people temporally retook Toronto from the right-wing forces that have controlled Ontario since the election of a Conservative government in June 1995. Under Premier Mike Harris, the provincial government has proceeded with an ideological right-wing economic restructuring such as Margaret Thatcher imposed on Britain: huge cuts in welfare, education, the health system, transfer payments to the municipalities, public sector workers, etc.

On October 25 a million people stayed away from work, shutting down the city. Rather than the traffic chaos predicted by the mass media, large parts of the city had a "Sunday morning" feel to it is as we discovered the obvious – that if workers quit working, the city gets quiet. Beginning at midnight with a large turnout to shut down the Toronto Transit Commission yards, hundreds of picket lines were set up across the metropolitan area. Except for emergency service, the public sector was nearly totally shut down including public transit, the post office, garbage collection, etc. Many transit workers who did cross the line refused to take their street cars or buses across the lines leaving management little choice but to accept the inevitable – there would be no service that day. Shutting down the heavily used transit system was a major victory and came in spite of a court injunction prohibiting the protestors from doing so.



All levels of education, from pre-school day care to universities were also all but closed down. In many high schools the handful of teachers who showed up outnumbered the students. Thousands of university and college students protested in one way or another, and state-supported day care, one of the most threatened sectors, was virtually non-existent.

Much of the private sector was also affected. All construction sites, both union and non-union, were shut down with persuasion being used in some cases. Many factories and other work places gave their workers a day off, either as a holiday or in exchange for work done at another time. Many suppliers, fearing the predicted traffic chaos, stepped up deliveries during the week and closed down for the day. Confrontational picketing at the Food Terminal, the main wholesale market for fruit and vegetables, closed it for much of the day.

Many non-union, private sector employees also stayed home. No doubt for many it was due to the predicted loss of transit, day care and schools, but the near total lack of traffic downtown showed that people didn't fight to get to work.

The international airport was picketed, they had also gotten an injunction limiting the picketing and ensuring that all essential workers would be allowed through, but so many people had changed plans that the two major airlines ended up cancelling many flights, and flying many empty seats.

The day itself was amazing. There were pickets at over 300 locations throughout the city – government offices, colleges, construction sites, factories, etc. Hundreds of people got into the Stock Exchange and spent nearly an hour shouting slogans, hammering on the glass barricade above the trading floor with sticks, leaving a trail of torn paper on the floor. The protestors left as the riot squad gathered.

The police, in general left the picketers alone, going with the ongoing policy of the Police Department to interfere only if there is "violence" on a picket line. The police on the scene at the transit yards only shrugged when management brought out the injunction making such picketing illegal. Reinforcements had been brought in from outside the city, but it was obvious that the police were going to let things ride, depending on union marshalls and strikers' "self-control" to keep the peace.

There was a festive atmosphere to much of the two days. Glorious autumn weather didn't hurt at all. We had reclaimed the City as our own, asserting a collective power and joy in opposition to the individualist ideology of right-wing economics.

Amongst the most positive gains:

• tens of thousands of people participated in a political demonstration for the first time.

• the political passions of activists were regenerated and renewed.

• the experience of seeing first hand the power of workers to withdraw their labour – without us the City doesn't run, and then to see tens of thousands of people marching in common cause, will, hopefully open many of us up to new political possibilities...

The primary political problem is that it is not clear how to go forward. The idea of a province-wide general strike is already being advanced, and considering that the Days of Action in Toronto were proceeded by similar days in four other Ontario cities, it would seem quite possible.

Yet it is not clear at all who will be the political beneficiaries. The New Democratic Party, historically supported by the unions, and ostensibly social-democratic, alienated many supporters by initiating the cutbacks when they were in power. The divisions they generated, particularly by attacking the public sector unions and community activists, resulted in their crushing defeat by the Conservatives in the 1995 election.

Forcing the Conservative government to resign would be a victory, but that would not get us back to what now seems like the prosperity of a golden age of the '80s in which the state had lots of money to hand out, welfare provided enough to live on, and workers were generally doing okay for themselves, or at least had the prospect of doing better. And for those of us who would prefer to ahead rather than back, it is not at all clear as to how we can go forward towards a democratic, egalitarian, green future. But then no one would have predicted a couple of years ago that we would shut down the city even for one day. We are left with new (as of yet, unarticulated) possibilities and a new sense of our own power.

— Jim Campbell (Prison News Service)

Ontario unions to scab

Thirteen unions said Nov. 8 that they'll keep working during future general strikes, even whilst most unions are planning the next day of action. Power Workers Union head John Murphy said his union would scab on future general strikes unless they are "tied to a specific event in that community such as hospital closures, school closures or scabs crossing a picket line."

Other unions threatening to scab include the United Steelworkers, the Amalgamated Transit Workers and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Murphy said unions should instead work to elect a New Democratic government at the next elections. The NDP was voted out last year after initiating the anti-labor policies which the Tories are now accelerating.

Toronto Day of Action...

continued from page 1

of Ernst Zundel, the neighbourhood Nazi, while the police were standing two deep in front of Zundel's house. The only abuse by the police I saw during the two days occurred there when police roughly pushed my 12-year-old son off the sidewalk and into the street. This was also where I saw the greatest police presence of the places I spent time at, a clear message of who the police deem worthy of protection.

By 10:00 a.m. we were at the offices of Toronto Hydro helping to maintain a small picket that was able to convince people that it was not a good day to pay their hydro bills. There were no police in view and during the hour we were there no one got in or out of the building.

We then went to Ryerson, a downtown university. Again, there was no police presence, but we were told they were massing a block away just outside a donut shop!

I managed to get to Toronto City Hall just in time to watch a labour flunky, claiming that the mayor was on our side, convince pickets to let the mayor in. Workers from the city-owned parking lots who are on strike to stop a two-tier pay scheme pushed by this same mayor were not too amused, nor were a couple of people who remembered the mayor had some young squatters charged with trespass for protesting in the city hall square their eviction from their home.

I missed the stock exchange action so I went to join the students walking up Bay Street to the Ministry of Education offices. It was then I met the Winnipeg fellow workers carrying the banner they had raised earlier that morning in the Stock Exchange. I marched with them a bit and then joined with some friends of mine from the United Farm Workers who had ended up as marshalls for the education rally. About 20,000 people turned out for this part of the days of action.

After it ended I went back to the ARA rally and spent an hour or so with some high-spirited and creative people. Joe Chang, the Toronto delegate, was also there. Surprisingly enough, the only politician I saw being an active participant during the whole days of action was also there. Jack Layton, a member of Metro Council, showed up to give a statement supporting ARA's efforts.

Friday was a day to renew aquaintances with people I hadn't seen for years. It was also a really nice day for those living in the city. It was quieter, cleaner and less tense that it usually felt. Perhaps it was the 1,000,000 stay-aways. More likely it was the reality that for the first time in our memories the city was really controlled by the people.

Saturday was even more powerful. I went with the faith communities, co-op members, etc. to the smaller staging area at Nathan Philips Square in front of Toronto City Hall. About 25,000 were there when I arrived. The numbers grew dramatically shortly thereafter. We left the square to be near the front of the march. When we arrived at Queen's Park it was already nearly half full – about 20,000 people. Two hours after we arrived the last of the people finally left the staging area well over 2 hours away. People were already leaving town on their buses well before the last marchers arrived. Billy Bragg, Moxie Fruvious, Arlene Mantle, Bruce Cockburn and Clifton Joseph, among others, kept us focused on why we were there while speeches helped to remind us who was there. The estimates by the CBC and other close to impartial observers were that close to 300,000 people showed up, police reports to the contrary. The rally closed with a committment to more days of action, including a possible province-wide general strike, if the Harris government doesn't back down.

The days of action actually concluded on Sunday the 28th with a multifaith worship service. A wide range of churches, including the United Church of Canada and a number of religious orders, endorsed the days of action and are willing to support the idea of a general strike to ensure economic justice in Canada.

The media may have provided a distorted view of the days of action as being unpopular, but in all my walking and riding around Toronto during the days of action I heard only a few complaints about the demonstrations. Most of those were based on what their boss was going to do if they couldn't get to work.

Impressions of the days are still strong. I'm 40 years old and have been going to demonstrations since I was a child spending time on the picket line with my father.

This is the first time that I felt the real power that we hold in our hands. I marched with members of theSalvation Army and the Communist Party of Canada, members of the Progressive Conservative Party and the anarchist community, pagans and many others who share a commitment to resistance to the neo-conservative agenda. Charities have lost funders. At least 15 people were arrested. Thousands of workers lost a day's pay. Tens of thousands participated in what was the largest demonstration in Ontario's history.

We still have a lot of work to do. The NDPers in the trade union movement still want to turn us into an electoral movement for the partythat brought in the social contract and began the cuts that have onlyintensified under Mike Harris. Many others feel that it is time to move onto a corporate campaign and have suggested boycotting Coca Cola (I'm serious) as a way to defeat the neo-con agenda. Still, a large number of trade union, women's movement, community, church, environmental and student activists are calling for a province-wide general strike for May 1st of next year. I am working for the general strike in Ontario. Hopefully, our fellow workers around the workers can have solidarity actions whenever the next days of action occur and maybe we'll bring them all down.

— Brian Burch

Boycott Borders Notebook

An early October picket at the Albany Borders, while failing to turn away substantial numbers of customers, established quite a presence for the local IWW group. Capital District Wobblies, joined by fellow workers from Central New York and other activists, worked the entire width of the large storefront on busy Wolf Road. In a two-hour sidewalk detail, 140 *Industrial Workers* and about 200 boycott leaflets were distributed. We mounted picket signs in the shrubbery and left no room for patrons to escape contact with a peaceful, persistent gauntlet.

We are perplexed, frankly, by the lack of intervention by Borders management on this occasion. The obvious assumption was Borders' desire to protect their precious public image at all costs, so they simply ignored us. Our manner was polite, if a little playful with customers; our desire only to educate them. Still, a scissorbill or two whined to a Borders manager about being harassed. So it looks like we'll be relegated to a roadside walkway for future actions. This will decrease personal contact with customers, but that doesn't mean we won't apply a little creativity. A mass picket planned to mobilize many other local unionists and other supporters will make an impact on Thanksgiving weekend, traditionally one of the biggest shopping periods of the year.

Many customers, regardless of their class, crossed our picket lines, explaining that Borders carried a unique book or musical recording -- a righteous shopper attitude of sorts. Some patrons turned their nose up at the idea we supported -- shopping at locally owned, independent bookstores, a comprehensive list of which we supplied. A strident "how dare you question my buying decision" aire fairly oozed from some Borders customers.

While this arrogant, class-ignorant demeanor is antithetical to the struggle for workplace justice, it is rooted in the powerlessness of a dumbed-down, consumerist, class-collaborative culture. Understand -- this is no apology for this behavior. But we must realize that in a very real sense the typical consumer has little in his or her life to decide that has any real impact on anything, save for a little instant gratification once in a while. So as shoppers, a deranged kind of autonomy has developed. One need not seem surprised when a scissorbill gets pissy when you give them a line of talk about crossing a picket line; after all their masters have taught them well.

G.G.

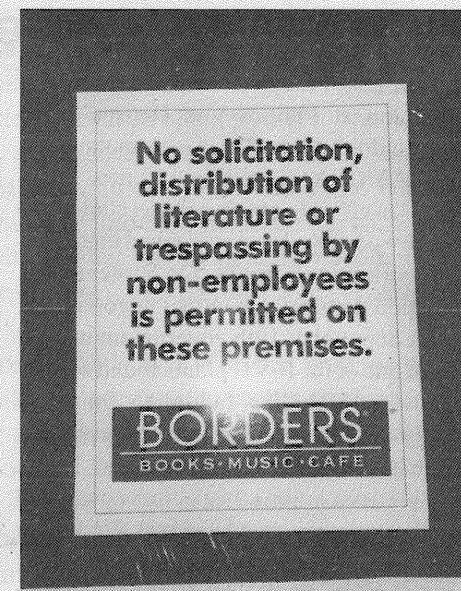
Borders feels the heat

FW Dorice McDaniels (a class war veteran for many decades now) reports that she and another fellow worker were accosted by Borders managers while picketing the Torrance, Calif., Borders. Despite being ordered to leave the premises, they continued leafletting until the police arrived and informed them that they faced imminent arrest.

FW Bob Rivera was threatened with assault by a Borders flunky while picketing (in his wheelchair) a B.B. King appearance at the Ann Arbor, Mich., Borders in mid-October.

In downtown Boston, Wobs report that the windows are filled with cobwebs and posters for long-past events, while help wanted signs greet those customers willing to cross the picket line. The store is being picketed one to two times a week, turning away many customers and distributing hundreds of leaflets about the dispute. In an interesting development, some workers in the store have begun taking IWW organizing literature and discussing it among themselves on breaks.

In Ann Arbor, a large peace and justice organization recently withdrew from its annual Book Days promotion with Borders. Local Wobs are organizing a Dec. 16th protest action at Borders headquarters to mark the six-month anniversary of FW Fried's firing, in coordination with protest actions around the country. The Borders Boycott has been endorsed by local chapters of the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom and Jobs with Justice.



The Bookstore Chains

In 1958, one-store book firms accounted for nearly 80 percent of all sales of general interest books, and the four biggest chains accounted for only 11.6 percent of bookstore sales. By 1995 57.3 percent of books were bought from chain outlets.Barnes & Noble and Borders dominate the retail book market, and have taken advantage of their commanding position to extract extra discounts and subsidies from publishers (and which are not available to independent booksellers). With their centralized book ordering and heavy advertising budgets, the chains also dominate the bestseller lists.

Barnes & Noble is the largest book chain, operating under the Barnes & Noble, B. Dalton, Bookstar, Bookstop, Doubleday and Scribner's names, as well as owning 20 percent of Canada's Chapters book chain.

The Borders Group is the U.S.'s #2 book chain, formed when Kmart merged its Borders and Waldenbooks divisions and sold them in two 1995 stock offerings. Borders takes in more than $1.7 billion a year from 1,100 stores operating under the Borders, Brentano's, Planet Music and Waldenbooks names.. Although profitability has been hurt by rapid superstore expansion, Borders is highly regarded by stock market analysts. Alex. Brown & Sons "recommend aggressive current purchase" of Borders stock, while Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette point to its "well trained staff focused on providing the customer with the best experience in this segment... employee empowerment and a culture attuned to success."

But while Borders' highly trained workforce may well be central to its prospects, they are increasingly dissatisfied. The company has sought to block unionization efforts by terrorizing and intimidating union supporters through captive meetings, interrogations, firings and captive meetings. Borders workers start at $5.50 to $6.25 an hour; last year Borders' top two executives received $790,000 each (excluding stock options) and held Borders stock worth more than $28 million dollars (excluding long-term stock options).

Bridgestone dispute settled

The United Steelworkers of America (USWA), which represents workers at tire giant Bridgestone/Firestone, has settled its two-year dispute – all strikers will get their jobs back but will have to work under conditions the union had denounced as intolerable. The USWA abandoned the strike after Bridgestone resumed production with scabs. When the company refused to rehire many strikers, the union launched an international corporate campaign. Many local governments agreed to join the USWA's boycott of Bridgestone, Saturn allowed buyers of new cars could insist on substitute tires (though union workers continued installing the scab tires on most cars), and a major New Orleans tire retailer recently ended 30 years of business with Bridgestone to protest the company's attacks on its workers.

Under the new USWA-Bridgestone contract, all strikers will be returned to the jobs they had when the dispute began; scabs will be kept on, but may be demoted to make room for union members; workers will receive modest pay hikes; paid holidays will be restored to 11 (from 7); but workers will have to accept Bridgestone's practice of requiring workers to put in three 12-hour shifts one week and four 12-hour shifts the next. The contract covers workers in Decatur, Akron, Des Moines, Oklahoma City and Noblesville, Ind.

Government unions?

Despite mass public outcry, the Manitoba government rammed through bill after rights-stripping bill Nov. 7 and 8. First, union power was limited by provisions which call for mandatory contract votes at the request of the employer and Labour Minister. Unions are now restricted in their political campaigns, and will have to make extensive financial reports similar to those required under the U.S.'s anti-labor Landrum-Griffin Act. Bill 36moves one step closer to "work-for-welfare." Bill 32 eliminates student representation from university governing boards. And teachers can no longer bargain salaries as school districts now are to pay "only what they can afford."

TA strike set at Univ. of California

As we go to press the Association of Graduate Student Employees (AGSE/UAW) is set to begin a five day strike at the Los Angeles campus Nov. 18th and a three-day strike Nov. 20th at the Berkeley campus. The strikes are in response to a university decision to appeal a legal decision that found teaching assistants, readers and tutors to have collective bargaining rights under state law. San Diego and other graduate employees have pledged to join the walk-out if the University does not agree to recognize the union and begin negotiations.

AGSE/UAW has been seeking collective bargaining rights for academic student employees – graduate student instructors, researchers, readers, tutors and acting instructors – since 1983. Thus far, Berkeley administration has extended collective bargaining only to readers, tutors and acting instructors. Union members at the Berkeley, Los Angeles and San Diego campuses voted last spring to strike unless the UC administration granted recognition for ASEs. In all, 10,000 out of 15,000 academic student employees system-wide have signed cards indicating their desire for union representation.

Finance Minister:

Up is Down

Statistics Canada reports the unemployment rate as 10 percent. But Finance Minister Paul Martin wants Canadians to look on the bright side. The unemployment rate is up, Martin says, because the economy is improving and more people are re-entering the labour force. He's right. There's a huge number of unemployed people who don't count as unemployed because they've given up looking for work.

What Martin is really saying is "don't believe us when we say the unemployment rate is 9.3% or 9.9%, because it's actually much higher." And don't believe them either when they tell you it's 10% because it's still much higher than 10%, even if it's slightly lower than when it was reported to be "only" 9.9%.

National Day of Action...

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Philadelphia's *City Paper* that "a simple apology and two round trips to Acapulco might have settled the Fried case months ago." Borders workers know this – and have expressed more interest than ever in organizing. Workers at the Lakeview Chicago store won the first union shop with UFCW Local 881 in early October.

On the legal front we are pushing ahead with both our NLRB charges and our appeal of a referee's decision to deny Miriam's unemployment claim.

Make a special effort to picket Borders, Waldenbooks and Brentano's on December 15th. Copies of flyers and calls for solidarity are available from the Philadelphia GMB. In Philadelphia, young participants in the AFL-CIO's Union Summer are organizing their campuses. The Ethnic Labor Coalition has been invited to participate. We are looking forward to a huge turn-out, and expect that the publicity generated by our six-month anniversary picket will be enormous.

Are You Furious?

IWW member Alexis Buss has compiled: "Are you Furious?: Boycott Borders Info Packet" published by the Philadelphia General Membership Branch of the IWW. Spiral bound, 55 pages, available from IWW General Headquarters for $5, but additional donations are strongly encouraged. All proceeds beyond the cost of shipping will go to promote ongoing organizing and boycott activities at Borders nationally and to provide defense for fired Borders worker and IWW organizer Miriam Fried.

The book is a compilation of newspaper articles, correspondence, and documents about the IWW organizing drive at Borders Books in Philadelphia, the subsequent firing of Miriam Fried, and the boycott activities of IWW members and supporters around the U.S. as a result. It is a valuable tool for organizing in the ongoing Borders drive and for countering the lies of Borders management. Updates on a quarterly basis are in the planning stages.

Solstice Greetings

on

Jerusalem Slim's Birthday

(Itinerant Rebel Carpenter)

— from Harry Siitonen
San Francisco Bay Area GMB

Phillips-Van Heusen Union-Busting

On Labor Day weekend the four-year old union at Phillips-Van Heusen's two maquiladora plants in Guatemala City, STECAMOSA, signed up 130 new members in an effort to obtain a union contract to improve poverty-level wages and unacceptable working conditions. On September 2, the union demanded contract negotiations.

A September 19th government inspection of one of the P-VH plants found several violations, including failure to fully pay legally-required bonus and holiday pay, inadequate child-care facilities, and health and safety violations. Inspectors concluded that the company owed workers $26,000 in back pay. At press time, safety conditions remain uncorrected and P-VH has yet to pay workers their back pay. The government is threatening to impose a fine of $83.33 (Guatemalan labor law offers little more protection to workers than does U.S. law).

Phillips Van-Heusen is responding to these efforts to secure basic labor protections with threats and intmidation. Earlier this year P-VH closed three factories in Alabama, costing 1,200 U.S. workers their jobs. But P-VH is not only shifting production away from the U.S., it is shifting work from its own unionized facilities to substandard contractors in San Pedro, Sacatepequez, a village outside of Guatemala City.

P-VH management has also been raising the specter of violence. Supervisors claim that they are being threatened and intimidated by union members, a charge the union emphatically denies. P-VH has provided new private security agents to accompany two supervisors to and from work. During the work day, the agents, armed with guns and walkie-talkies, stand outside the factory gates, which workers understandably interpret as an act of intimidation. Managers are also calling union members into one-on-one meetings and pressuring them to resign.

Ironically, P-VH CEO Bruce Klatsky was keynote speaker at an Oct. 29 event sponsored by Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility. Activists turned out to demand that P-VH respect workers' rights. There has also been leafletting at P-VH and J.C. Penny stores around the country.

P-VH stores go by the following names: Van Heusen, Bass (shoes), Bass Kids, Cape Isle Knitters, and Windsor Shirts. In addition, P-VH owns the following labels: 417, Geoffrey Beene, Jantzen, Gant, and Izod.

For sample leaflets and other information, contact Hannah Frisch, US/Guatemala Labor Education Project (tel: 773/262-6502; fax: 773/262-6602; e-mail: usglep@igc.apc.org; POB 268-290, Chicago IL 60626). To let P-VH know what you think of their union-busting, write Bruce Klatsky, Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10104. US/GLEP has a response to P-VH's standard evasions available upon request.

Messages of solidarity can be sent to the union at fax: 011-502-238-0413, or via e-mail to rdoumitt@igc.apc.org.

Mersey dockers battle bosses, piecards

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ing upon their unions throughout the world to organize financial and moral support and where possible, to organize industrial action including boycott actions" in support of the dockers. Marges' letter quoted another inspector as expressing the feelings of all: "The trade union movement in the UK has lost many battles, this needs to be won."

"Splendid! The ITF was supporting the Liverpool dockers.....or so we were lead to believe. No sooner did we arrive home than reality struck. On January 23, a subsequent circular by Marges put the brakes on any supportive action: "ITF affiliates must await the signal of the ITF before organizing any solidarity action." But ITF signalmen have been asleep at the switch from the start.

"From the 3-5 July Fair Practices Committee meeting came a pronunciamiento that the ITF was finally "supporting" the dockers. But it was not to be. Ten days later four Liverpool dockers occupied two container cranes in Montreal, Canada. The strikers where able to galvanize support from the longshoremen and much of the Canadian labor movement. According to Michel Murray, president of the Syndicat Des Debardeurs, the Montreal longshore union, the ITF inspector called London to inform them of the action and suggest he board the affected ship (which had an ITF contract) to make sure seamen were not scabbing by doing longshore work. The ITF inspector was firmly told, "Don't go near that ship!" ... So, does the ITF "support" the Liverpool dockers? Yes, like a rope supports a hanged man! ITF hypocrisy has functioned consistently throughout the strike, saying one thing publicly and doing another behind closed doors...

"Why has the ITF been navigating such a treacherous course? I believe there are a number of reasons which basically emanate from the ITF's conservative world view... The ITF is the richest of all International Trade Secretariats, a wealth derived from... shipowners' contributions to the Welfare Trust...

"The militant leadership of the Liverpool dockers uses class struggle tactics which challenge capitalist property "rights" such as the occupying of container cranes and seeks to build picket lines that stop scabs... Against all odds – against an anti-labor government, anti-labor laws, anti-labor news media, a predatory employer, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company and a class-collaborating union bureaucracy – the Liverpool dockers have succeeded in inspiring real international labor solidarity, like no other struggle in recent maritime history. Their victory could be a catalyst to reverse the tide of labor defeats since 1989 that have inundated the British docks through privatization and casualization of labor.

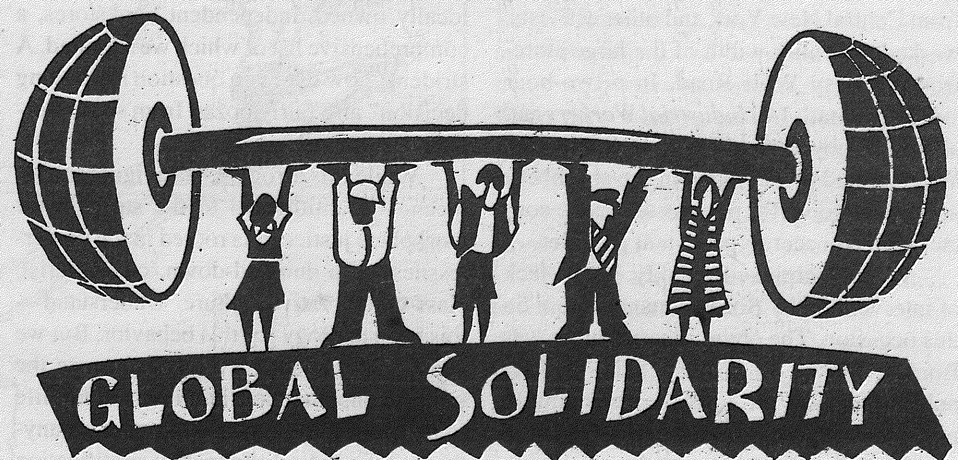
"But a victory for the Liverpool dockers would destroy Cockroft, Marges and Co.'s self-fulfilling prophecy that the dockers can't win. It would offer an alternative to the defeatist strategy of the ITF/TUC/TGWU that contains struggles against employer attacks within "legal," "responsible" and "official" bounds, a strategy that has so far lost every port save Liverpool... Anything more, they cry, would threaten sequestration of "their" union treasuries.

"This aristocracy of labor, while bemoaning draconian Thatcherite anti-labor laws (which their darling Labourite Tony Blair has vowed to uphold if elected!) actually use them as an excuse for inaction... What really underlies ITF fear of a successful strike in Merseyside is the creation of a parallel organization of dockers. The Liverpool dockers have inspired maritime workers around the world to come together to discuss how they can concretely support them in the heat of battle. Beyond that there is the obvious need to organize a coordinated, militant, international effort to defend workers against privatization and attendant casualization attacks from global shipowner alliances that we all face.."

Heyman's letter went on to criticize the ITF's modest level of financial support, contrasting it to the millions of pounds to religious organizations (presumably to subsidize seamen's missions and similar outfits that offer charity to destitute maritime workers, rather than building the strength to wrest decent conditions for themselves).

Killings continue in Colombia

Killings of Colombian unionists continue unabated. At least 15 Colombian unionists were murdered in September and October, mostly members of the banana plantation workers' union Sintrainagro in Colombia's banana-producing region of Uruba (on Colombia's Atlantic Coast). The most recent attack came on October 24 when three banana workers were shot dead by unidentified gunmen. The Colombian government has done little to investigate the murders. The International Union of Food Workers (IUF) says 500 unionists have been assassinated in the region this year.



U.S. mail sorted in Reynosa maquiladora

Local 4325 of the American Postal Workers Union, located in McAllen, Texas, has discovered that companies doing bulk mailings have set up operations in Mexican maquiladoras to handle mail sorting. San Diego-based Envisions recently opened a plant in Reynosa, just across the U.S.-Mexican border from McAllen. The plant employs 180 workers, but plans to employ as many as 1,000 by year's end.

Envisions is a "pre-sort" house that prepares bulk mailings for businesses. These customers receive a discount from the U.S. Postal Service for having their mailings presorted and pre-coded. Envisions takes in bulk business mail from companies located in Chicago and Indianapolis. The mail is processed through remote encoding technology owned by the Postal Service and licensed to private companies, which sends an image of individual pieces of mail to computer screens located in Reynosa. The bar code is automatically printed on the mail in Chicago or Indianapolis. Workers in the Mexican plant are paid $4 per day to type the appropriate bar code on each piece that appears on their computer screen.

Jobless protest Social Dems

More than 4.000 people, mostly unemployed unionists, marched in Stockholm against the Swedish Social Democratic government' austerity program Oct. 17. Cuts to the once-famous Swedish welfare system have thrown many workers into a dire poverty unknown in Sweden for generations. More than 700,000 Swedes (about 14 percent) are out of work and the figure is rising. At the same time severe cuts are made in the unemployment system, as well as in the social secutity net, leaving tens of thousands on the brink of disaster!

Similar protests have been taking place across the country, as workers became increasingly enraged at the so-called workers' government. The "socialists" have joined the German push for a monetary union, bringing Sweden to the brink of a gigantic disaster of poverty and unemployment.

Mumia Railroaded

Hanging Judge Albert Sabo has ruled that a witness's effort to recant testimony that helped convict class war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal can't be considered in the ongoing appeal for a new trial. Veronica Jones' claim that police coerced her into falsely testifying against Abu-Jamal 14 years ago is "worthy of little or no belief," Sabo ruled, continuing in his role as assistant prosecutor in charge of covering-up evidence of police misconduct in the case.

Jones testified that she initially told police she saw two men running from the crime scene a few minutes after the shooting — something Abu-Jamal could not have done because the police officer he is charged with killing had seriously wounded him. Three other witnesses reported seeing the gunman flee, but after police pressure only one testified to the incident at Mumia's trial.

Jones said two officers visited her in jail while she was being held on an armed robbery charge and offered to save her from a possible prison term if she changed her original statement. Because she was scared, Jones said, she testified at Abu-Jamal's trial that she saw no one leaving the scene.

While Jones was testifying, she was arrested on an old bench warrant for a bad-check charge. Defense attorneys vigorously objected to this harassment, and Mumia supporters quickly raised bail.

Fired for forming union

In the heart of touristy Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, non-union fish processors work grueling hours for low wages under abusive working conditions – no breaks, over-time abuse, discrimination and sexual harassment. Workers at H & N Fish Company, almost all recent immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico, decided to organize for better wages and conditions. H & N Fish is one of the largest fish processors in the Bay Area with more than $100 million a year in revenues. Since workers began organizing in September, two have been terminated, seven workers were threatened, at least six were bribed, and 22 workers were laid off October 26.

Encounters in Chiapas

"Here we are, the dead of all time, dying once again, only now with the object of living.

"You have to get out of yourself to save yourselves.

"What we seek, what we need and want is that all those people without a party and organization make agreements about what they want and do not want and become organized in order to achieve it (preferably through civil and peaceful means), not to take power, but to exercise it." — EZLN/ Subcommandante Marcos

The buses, slowly moving down the 60-mile dirt road to La Realidad, stop again. Why? We, participants in the Intercontinental Encounter against Neoliberalism and for Humanity, get off and walk around. The word filters back: a bridge is out and we have to fix it. Arriving on the scene, I see that the bridge is made of iron piping, the kind used to keep cattle from crossing, and it is lying on the road next to the gully it used to span. Campesinos are digging in the gully. Using trimmed limbs of trees as rollers, braces and levers, dozens of us, women and men, including Superbarrio in his flamboyant red costume, slowly maneuver the bridge into place. We are applauded by many more, bus riders and local folk, who are too many for everyone to put a hand on the bridge.

Between bouts of lifting, we wonder how the bridge got moved. One rumor is that the local campesinos moved it so they could charge our buses a toll. But this makes no sense: the campesinos are pleased to see us helping them replace the bridge. One of them, together with a few men from our caravan, takes leadership in directing the replacement. Ideas flow from the working group, are considered and often used, in a democratic process.

A joke circulates that the Zapatistas moved the bridge so we would have to learn cooperative physical labor. But really it seems that the gully was partly blocked so the rainy-season water was not running properly. The bridge had to be moved so the gully could be dug out and then the bridge set properly. That's when our caravan, the early stages of perhaps 40 buses, arrived. Anyway, the activity is a pleasant break in a 14-hour trip, and it is not now raining and the ground is not muddy.

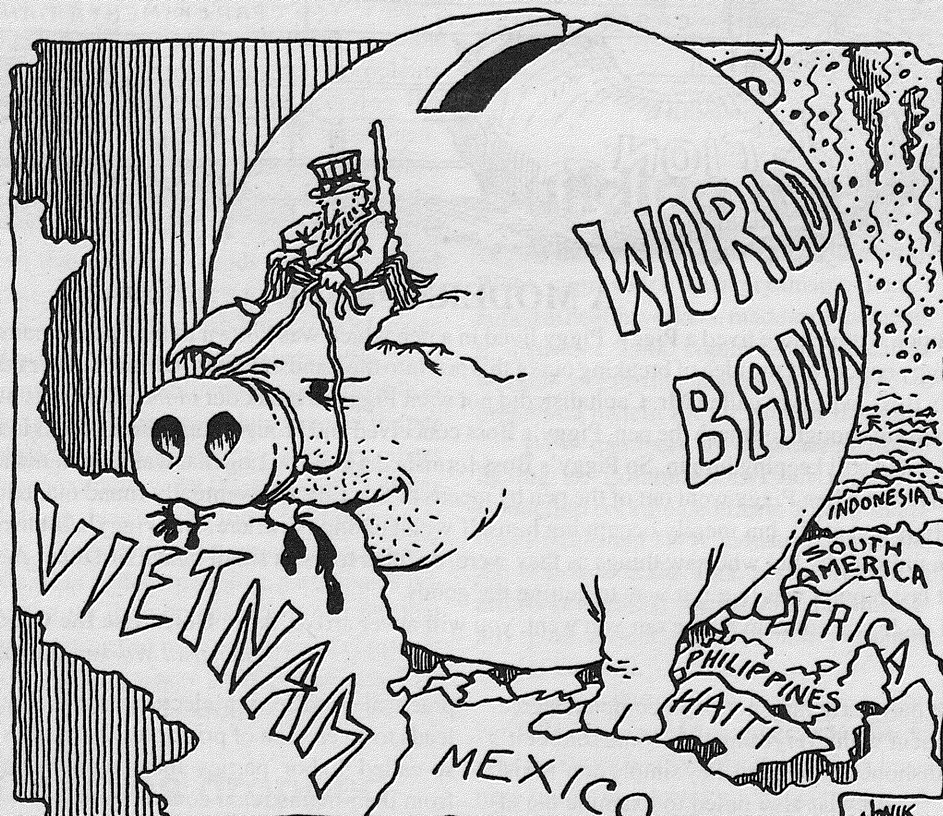
ENCIRCLED by the armed women and men of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), people from over 40 countries meet in an Encuentro in the rain and mud season of Chiapas in southeastern Mexico. We are here in the thousands. Mexico, Spain, France, Italy and Germany provide the largest groups, the U.S. delegation is unfortunately small, and smaller delegations have arrived from other European countries, Japan, and the rest of the Americas with a few from Oceania, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

Our diversity is not just our continents and nations, or our gender (perhaps 40% women) or age (mostly young rather than veterans of the sixties), but our experiences and ideas. These we are to share and reshape through the experience of the encounter in the forest, striving toward a new possibility.

It is not quite the whole world, with too few from the South of our planet, and it is not likely that the kind of work, paid or unpaid, that the participants do accurately reflects the work done across the planet. But has there ever been such a gathering? We are not a party, nor party representatives to a Comintern. Indeed, we are not representatives but simply ourselves, though we are labeled "delegations." Many are activists from various forms of community and workplace struggles, such as the Argentinean mothers of the disappeared.

We certainly are not the owning class, who meet in fancy hotels with fine wines and fancy foods. Rather, we sleep on the ground or in hammocks under plastic roofs, or in tents, and eat tamales, enchiladas, beans and soups. Alcohol and drugs are prohibited in the rules we each signed as a condition of attending. This gathering is, after all, in a war zone.

Thus, security concerns are real. At the start, in Oventic, not far from San Cristobal, everyone is thoroughly searched. Divided in two lines, women and men, standing behind their packs, a Zapatista empties each pack, feeling for weapons. Even Swiss army knives are taken, a receipt given to pick them up when leaving. A quick pat-down, then the Zapatistas carefully re-fill each bag. It is all done with care and respect for our belongings and our persons.



In the beginning and at the end, in La Realidad, southeast toward the Guatemalan border, the Encuentro meets as a whole. In between, it separates into five mesas (tables) to discuss politics, economics, society, culture and identity. Each table divides further into sub-mesas.

The additional three village sites, all in or near the Lacandon forest, are Roberto Barrios (near the great Mayan ruins of Palenque), Morelia, and La Garrucha. To arrive at the villages requires traveling past the Mexican army, which has set up a base next to each community that has declared itself a Zapatista community, and past the immigration checkpoints set up to harass us all, both Mexicans and non-Mexicans. Getting to Roberto Barrios required walking through the army base then fording a stream.

At each locale the mesa is within a circle, within the protection of the EZLN. At Roberto Barrios, the site of the economics table, some 3,500 local people, among the materially poorest on the planet, have spent four months constructing a space for the encounter: a hall to hold 400 (with rented chairs and an excellent sound system), a kitchen and a dining hall, sleeping areas, a space for the press and to house the omnipresent computers and to recharge batteries, showers and toilets. It is a huge, overwhelming and humbling gift.

Cooking is done by the community. Every day the local people, mostly Mayan of various groups (Chol, Tojolabal, Tzeltal, Tzotzil), clean and repair and take care of our physical needs. We do wash our own dishes. Some do not do this well and are sent back to do the job correctly.

The EZLN does not participate in the mesa discussion. At each sub-group, two commandantes sit and listen. They greet us at the start, thank us for our work at the end. They have provided the space for us to dialogue, but choose not to participate verbally. Still, the words and practice of the EZLN, the physicality of the rain and mud, and the space provided by the local community, surround and support the discussion.

I attended the economics mesa subgroup whose task was to define the economic dimensions of neoliberalism. Other mesas in economics focused on alternatives, on "progress" under neoliberalism (narco-trafficking, financial speculation, and deteriorating health care), and on work and the dictatorship of the market. There was a plenary one night with five papers presented. Amidst a range of cross-cutting issues, we talked intensely for two-and-a-half days, emerging, as did all the sub-tables, with a short paper, each of which was presented at a closing plenary of the mesa.

In each discussion group, papers were presented and discussed. In the one I attended, papers were grouped and summarized in clusters of four, followed by an hour of interventions and debate. This enabled a building process which greatly strengthened our final paper.

NEOLIBERALISM, our group said, is the current phase of capitalism. It has many names: structural adjustment, Reaganism, Thatcherism, the new world economic order, austerity. It is the immiseration of the many, caused by accumulation by and for the few, who back up their efforts with control of the state, the gun, the media. People's talks portrayed in detail the human faces of misery: loss of land, rising unemployment with no social wage or safety net, overwork, declining wages, increased homelessness, growing racism and attacks on immigrants/migrant workers, no health care, and in too many places not even running water or electricity.

Privatization, untrammeled rule of the market, globalization of the reserve army of labor, increased competition among workers, commodification of all kinds of social relations and of the body and mind, mad cow disease as a sign of the mad destruction of nature in the name of profits, financial speculations that shatter entire national economies in a few hours, slavery restored, the more intense attacks on women and children, reassertions of patriarchy, mobile production processes, debt, death squads and militarization within nations, and the leading world organizations of immiseration – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, NAFTA and Maastricht: The economy and social life have been re-shaped since the early 1970s, with an eye to extracting greater profits at the expense of working people around the world. However, the core of the problem is not just the neoliberal phase of capitalism, but capitalism itself.

Disagreements were voiced. One view (which I share) is that neoliberalism emerged in the 1970s as the capitalist response to world-wide class and social struggles which broke apart the planetary capitalist phase often labeled "Keynes-ianism" or "Fordism." Others, however, pointed to the mechanisms of capitalism, such as the falling rate of profit, as the source of the crisis which provoked neoliberalism.

Is neoliberalism itself in crisis? Some thought yes, others no, a discussion complicated by political ideas and experiences being transferred across languages and cultures. One position (again which I share) is that struggles have provoked crises and reshaped neoliberal practices, such as particular austerity plans of the World Bank and IMF. Yet clearly the cycles of struggles have not stopped the neoliberal process of driving down wages and multiplying divisions and borders within the working class of the world, waged and unwaged, landed and unlanded.

The sub-mesa discussed population, technology, the role of nations and the state, and the effects of social atomization. Its report recognized that neoliberalism could not be reduced to the economy, but controlled politics, used culture, dominated social institutions, and destroyed or reshaped identities, all in the search for profit and accumulation. Thus, though the group focused on economics, it saw struggles and alternatives across all these social terrains.

TRAVELING from town to town on long bus rides through spectacular, lush mountainous forest, deep valleys, innumerable fields of maize climbing steep hills, small villages and areas clearcut by a former governor for his personal enrichment, the Encuentro mapped a political geography that transcended the circles which held the discussions. Our movements crossed the enclosures of the Mexican army, our presence broke the enclosures of the Mexican state.

Relations between encuentristas and the Zapatista communities also broke through some circles. On the first night in Roberto Barrios, local musicians and dancers performed. Outside the hall stood local community people. As the rain began, a few inside shouted for them to join us under the roof. A Zapatista announced that the community had decided not to come inside because, for security, they wanted to have a cordon of people around the hall; that decision could not be overruled by the Encuentro.

Two nights later, as delegations from the various nations sang songs of resistance and liberation, and again community members danced and played, and a traveling troupe, "Arcoiris" (Rainbow), joined the festivities, the community of Roberto Barrios came into the hall. The women mostly sat in a group in the rear, the men stood by the entrance, the children moved about most freely, in a partial dissolution of another boundary, if not a complete break.

The discussions broke circles inscribed by language. Spanish was the language of the Encuentro, but many participants did not speak Spanish. Translation was arranged informally, with bilingual people from different nations sitting in clusters as translators who sacrificed their involvement in the discussion in order to keep others involved. And of course translation broke down at points, especially with some of the more complex presentations, leaving monolinguists with only rough approximations. Still, new connections transcended old borders.

For my submesa, it was not enough to begin to identify neoliberalism. We also asked ourselves, what do we want for hu-

continued on page 10

The Labor Party: Appropriating Wobbly Culture

On Wednesday October 9th muralist Mike Alewitz spoke at Olympia's Labor Temple, showing slides about the formation this summer of a new American Labor Party. Currently on a national tour to stump for the party, Alewitz made an emotional appeal for workers' support, emphasizing the important role that "cultural workers" could play in the development of the Labor Party.

If Alewitz had merely hyped his Labor Party I would have given him no more notice than any other political pitchman. After all, progressive parties come and go all the time – there's no reason to think the Labor Party will fare any differently than half a dozen other parties whose bleached bones dot the landscape of the Left. But what really got my goat was the way he appropriated Wobbly culture for his own ends, re-writing history in the process (more on this soon).

Alewitz began his presentation with some hyperbole. "What happened in Cleveland this summer was the most important political event to occur in this country in decades," he proclaimed. "For the first time since the 1940s the American working class has its own political party." To be sure, the Democrats and Republicans are two sides of the same capitalist coin, and he's right to insist that workers will never be at home in those parties.

But what about the Citizens' Party, the Green Party, or California's Peace and Freedom Party, not to mention efforts by the National Organization for Women to build a party? He may not be in complete agreement with everything they stand for but it's dishonest to pretend they simply don't exist.

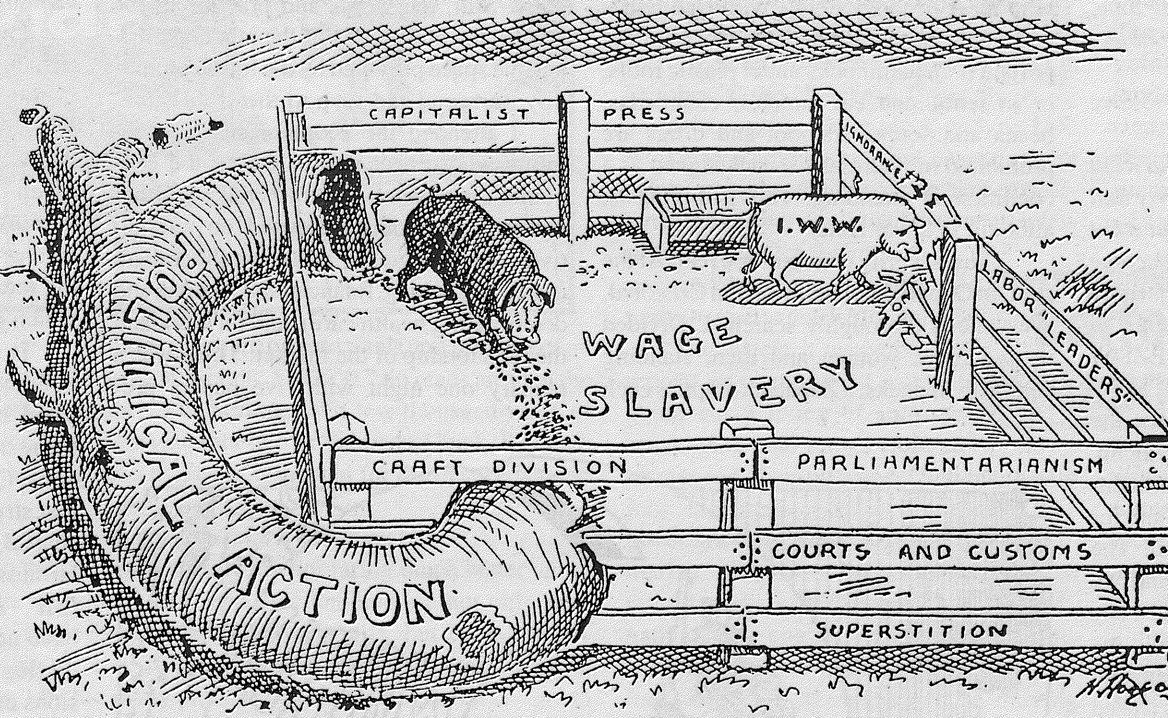
Alewitz also failed to examine the effectiveness of party-building in general. If we've learned anything from the Labor parties of England and Europe, it's that "workers" parties always end up replicating the monster they were created to destroy. The practical need to win elections inevitably leads to an erosion of principles that makes so-called Labor parties indistinguishable from their mainstream counterparts.

That erosion of principles is already evident in the new Labor Party's platform. An insistence on "Jobs for All," for instance, fails to question the fundamental boss/worker paradigm. By tacitly conceding the class relations of capitalist production the Labor Party fails to offer workers any hope of a genuinely self-managed economy. Yes, full employment *would* tip the balance in workers' favor by eliminating the scab labor pool, but a simple call for more jobs lacks the liberating vision we need to truly escape the chains of our past.

What irked me most was how Alewitz appropriated Wobbly culture. The Industrial Workers of the World were founded in 1905 by militant unionists who were fed up with the AF of L's ineffectual craft unionism. The IWW's founders dreamed of "One Big Union" that could unite all workers regardless of trade into a powerful, unified body capable of transforming society by abolishing capitalism once and for all. Those early Wobblies believed in fighting for economic justice with economic means and had a healthy distrust of political parties and their power-seeking leaders.

Alewitz took this Wobbly legacy and twisted it beyond all recognition. To illustrate the importance that cultural work can play in the working class movement, he recalled the famous Paterson silk strike of 1913 and the pageant about it. In an effort to build public support for the strike, journalist John Reed, Wobbly organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and several New York society women staged a dramatic re-enactment of it at Madison Square Garden, using the strikers to play themselves.

Alewitz nearly wrote the IWW out of



A MODERN FABLE

Once upon a time there lived a Piggy. Piggy lived in a pen which was known to men by the name of Wage-Slavery. Piggy conceived the idea of breaking out of this pen into the Land of Plenty, called **Industrial Freedom.** But Piggy's Boss, who was called Mr. Capitalist, did not want Piggy to break out of the pen; so, as he knew that Piggy was strong enough to smash the pen, Piggy's Boss conceived and brought forth the Brilliant Idea of letting Piggy out — and still keeping him in. So Piggy's Boss furnished a Hollow Log that was bent in the middle, and so arranged it that when Piggy went out of the pen by means of this Log, he eventually found out that he had not been out of his pen at all, but merely occupying himself with Getting Nowhere. But Piggy's brother, who was not long on philosophy but who saw things as they were, decided to use a small bunch of Direct Action on the pen, and at last reports was in a fair way to getting the goods.

Moral — If you come in where out you went, you will never arrive. Also, **Don't Use the Crooked Log.**

Industrial Worker, August 27, 1910

Encuentro in Chiapas...

continued from page 9

manity? What are we doing in practice to create the new from within the old?

We looked often at the emerging practice and dialogue surrounding us in the Zapatista army and communities. The EZLN has proposed a range – perhaps a contradictory range – of ways of living and doing politics and economics that build from the practices of the historical left and those of the Mayan people. In the EZLN command structure the community is at the top, with the leaders charged with obeying the will of the community. Politics is the process of dialogue, of coming to new understandings and practices through bottom-up social transformation. To create this space for change, as well as to warn the Mexican state that people facing death will not go peacefully, the EZLN has needed to use its guns.

To the submesa people brought a myriad of practices – equal exchanges, development of new forms of community, international solidarity actions and new forms of international links (such as is happening with dockworkers), and collective production processes. There was not time to explore what all these possibilities mean, where they cohere and where they contradict each other; where they can support fundamental change and where they may fuel capitalist growth or act to patch up a system which our sub-table thought was not salvageable for the benefit of humanity. I sensed new forms emerging of a long-standing division on the left, between reforming the system and replacing it with something radically new. Still, different perspectives and practices were together, offering material for debate.

Central to all the alternative proposals was the idea of stronger networks of communication and support. Survival and victory depends on coordinated action beyond the level of the nation. This need not mean centralized planning of struggles, but rather voluntary cooperation across a wide variety of situations and actions. Yet this formula has only an embryonic content: activists are just beginning to learn how to cooperate quickly and effectively so as to intensify, broaden, and deepen struggles.

At the final event, in La Realidad, as the Encuentro came back together, each subtable from all five mesas presented summaries. These told us something of who we were and were becoming, yet they were incomplete, a first step in a process of producing new relations of struggle.

Marcos' closing speech was a verbal contribution from the EZLN to the discussion. He reinforced the idea of breaking out of enclosures, remarking that even as neoliberalism globalizes the market it constructs more and more borders within countries and divisions among the people. He, too, emphasized the need to develop networks.

AT THE TIME of the Encuentro, armed struggles were expanding across Mexico. The Mexican army was militarizing all of southern Mexico, attacking all forms of popular organizations as the devastating consequences of neoliberal austerity deepened. The EZLN is now attempting to build the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN) and seeks to move beyond the armed struggle, but they are not sure it will be possible. Soon after the end of the Encuentro, the EZLN broke off negotiations with the Mexican government, accusing the government of failing to negotiate in good faith, failing to implement existing accords, failing to release Zapatistas held prisoner, and militarizing Mexico.

The heart of the Encuentro was to begin to create a new "we." I don't know if this new we will grow, expand, deepen, learn, and act with increasing capacity against neoliberalism and for humanity, but I did detect a few positive signs:

We leave with a sense of urgency – to support the Zapatistas and to find new ways of combatting neoliberalism across the globe – and of patience. By now we should know, from historical experience such as the Mexican revolution, that a revolution is not simply a moment in time, but a protracted process. As Commandante Tacho explained in the final plenary, everything can be done, but even small things can be hard to do. We need a practice of urgent patience. In this practice, we might include local and regional encounters to try to forge new ways of thinking and working together across the borders the system continuously erects. Another intercontinental encounter is being planned for next year in Europe.

We leave with more questions than answers, but at this stage of recomposition that is a healthy acknowledgement. New networks were proposed, one for building and circulating struggles, the other an alternative communication network, both to be decentralized – but how will these really work to strengthen and expand the struggle against capitalism? We oppose neoliberalism and have perhaps sketched its definition, but what actions do these analyses impel us to take? The care and respect we received from the Zapatista communities was certainly a working practice of "for humanity." Still, our conversations barely touched on what it means to be "for humanity," what "humanity" means in a world of class exploitation, or how we can free ourselves from the tortures and expropriations some humans have created for the rest.

We leave with great hope, having seen the capacity of the Mayan people to provide a space for thousands of visitors from around the planet. Much indeed is possible. Lightly-armed guerrillas held off a modern army, creating new spaces. How surreal is it for thousands of people to bathe in the mud in the mountain jungles and discuss economic and political theory and dare to imagine we can win a new world? Is our hope crazy, or is it our only chance?

The deepening crisis in Mexico will have powerful ramifications in the U.S. The left in the U.S., such as it is, ignores Mexico at its peril. The U.S. government and transnational corporations continue to supply the Mexican state and capitalists with billions of dollars and, often under the guise of the drug war, new sophisticated weaponry. If, as some analysts suggest, Mexico breaks apart, as it did in its last revolution, the U.S. government is sure to intervene to protect the interests of capitalism. And more than stopping intervention, U.S.-based activists need to help a new Mexican revolution succeed.

Creating a new we means in part building bridges across the Rio Grande. The bridges enable travel two ways: the Zapatistas' words and actions show that we in the U.S. need them, for from a supposedly isolated corner of the planet comes not only a challenge to neoliberalism that has yet to be contained, but comes also a challenge for us all to rethink ourselves and act anew against the misery created by the capitalist system. It is not them and us working on the bridge, it is us.

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the strike, only mentioning near the end that "the workers brought in some Wobbly organizers for the expertise they could lend." In fact the IWW had been organizing in Paterson since 1905, working hard to bring the many ethnic factions together into a coherent strike force. The pageant itself was highly controversial and believed by many to have diverted scarce resources away from the picket line, leading ultimately to the collapse of the strike. As Melvyn Dubofsky explains in *We Shall Be All:*

"From the next morning on, the strike went downhill; the pageant proved to be its climax, the rest was anti-climax. Reed had promised money for the strikers - thousands of dollars to feed, clothe, and shelter them - and now he couldn't deliver on his promise. Preparations for the pageant had meanwhile distracted strikers from the more important job of picketing. While they turned away from the from the field of life to the fantasy of the theatre, the first significant numbers of strikebreakers entered Paterson's mills. The pageant provoked jealousy as well. Only a thousand strikers could go to New York, leaving 24,000 others behind."

He didn't stop with Paterson. Alewitz proceeded to desecrate the memory of Wobbly songwriter Joe Hill, composer of such labor classics as The Rebel Girl and Casey Jones the Scab. (To be fair, this is not unusual. Mainstream labor has long claimed Joe Hill as one of their own despite the fact that, when he was alive, Hill often derided the AF of L.)

Alewitz showed Labor Day marchers dressed up as "blockheads," in reference to Hill's song Mr. Block about a stupid, well-meaning worker who believes everything his boss and political leaders tell him. Does Alewitz know that the song's final verse describes how Block gets duped by socialist politicians?

If Alewitz had simply argued his case on its own merits, I'd have been happy to merely disagree. But to appropriate the personalities and activities of the IWW and use them to promote a project so antithetical to the union's goals seems criminal. Like a gravedigger caught muddy-handed in the moonlight, Alewitz acted like a man who'd seen a ghost when he realized there were real live Wobblies in the audience. He forgot – that We Never Forget.

— Jess Grant

Silent Agitators

10 designs to a sheet. 50 cents a sheet, minimum order 4 sheets. Wet and stick.

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Six bumperstickers, each with IWW Globe on left. Slogans: Solidarity Forever, One Big Union, Because Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed, An Injury to One Is an Injury to All!, Don't Mourn Organize, Labor is Entitled to All It Creates. Black on durable white stock, $1.25 each, post-paid.

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Labor Law for the Rank & Filer. by Staughton Lynd.
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Are You Furious?
Borders boycott campaign resource manual. $5 minimum donation

IWW Little Red Songbook (36th Edition)
103 labor songs from around the world, with music. Includes classics and new songs by Billy Bragg, Anne Feeney, Charlie King, Utah Phillips, etc. $10

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The Centralia Tragedy of 1919: Elmer Smith and the Wobblies by Tom Copeland. $17.50.

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Building rank-and-file dockers' solidarity

Dockers from 18 ports in ten countries met in Paris October 26 to 27 to coordinate industrial action. The dockers steering committee, a follow-on from the conference at the end of August (see report in our October issue), was hosted by Le Havre dockers and had representatives from ports in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Canada, the U.S. west coast and Liverpool.

Delegates recognised that all unions now involved in solidarity would be affected by the outcome with Mersey Docks. The Committee will therefore organise approaches to European ports, with a particular focus on Belgium, Holland and Germany, seeking industrial action against shipping lines calling in Liverpool.

The next morning, Oct. 28, 4,000 dockers throughout Spain, the Basque Country, Canary Islands and the Balearic Isles (Mallorca), paralysed ports for one hour in solidarity with Liverpool and as a warning shot to their own employers and Government. Called jointly by the Coordinadora, Union General de Trabajadores (UGT), and Comisiones Obreros (CCOO), the stoppage demanded reinstatement of the sacked Liverpool dockers men and a negotiating framework to guarantee workers in Spain would not be thrown on the scrap heap in a scramble for business.

The delicate dance by Transport & General Workers Union (to which the Mersey dockers are affiliated) and International Transport Workers Federation officers to simultaneously proclaim their support for the Mersey dockers whilst simultaneously undercutting their efforts to mobilise effective support has broken down. While T&G officials desparately seek some face-saving compromise in which a handful of dockers would return to work while most would land on the dole, the dockers have been forced to turn to rank-and-file dockers around the world for support. In the process they have challenged the authority of the ITF, demonstrating through their action that workers are quite capable of supporting each other without meddling bureaucrats.

The struggle has also exposed the ITF's strategy of immobilism – standing still, holding its breath, holding its ground as best it can and hoping the storm will blow over. But the capitalist offensive is not blowing over, and the fixed-in-place officials have simply removed themselves from the battle. Of course, the ITF has substantial funds and assets to protect, but if these cannot be made available to assist workers in our struggles, then they are useless.

Below are excerpts from former ITF inspector Jack Heyman (he resigned to protest ITF policy toward the Mersey dockers) to the ITF's communications director, who has been attacking critics (including IWW General Executive Board member Kevin Brandstatter) of the ITF's do-nothing policy.

"Being simultaneously an ITF inspector and supporter of the Liverpool dockers, I felt myself conflicted and ultimately resigned my ITF post effective October 1, 1996. I'd like to shed some light on the ITF's role in the Merseyside struggle which lead me to make that decision."

Heyman notes he was ordered by ITF Dockers Secretary Kees Marges not to attend the International Dockers Conference in Liverpool in February. "The day before I was to fly to Liverpool, Kees Marges, who'd not been able to reach me by fax, insisted in a telephone conversation that I not attend the International Dockers Conference in Liverpool. He stated that 1) the strike was illegal and unofficial, not having been endorsed by the TGWU 2) the TGWU, an ITF affiliate, was not requesting support and the ITF was adhering to that request 3) the dockers couldn't win..."

""What disturbs me is the ITF paradox, arguing on the one hand that they support the strike and on the other why they can't. I first encountered this contradiction at the ITF's Worldwide Inspectors Seminar in January of this year. I'd just come from Liverpool (my first trip there) where, on behalf of the ILWU (West Coast longshore union) I had expressed international solidarity greetings at a mass rally and strike meeting. I was moved by the rank and file dockers sense of commitment, determination, discipline and morale, which after a four-month low ebb was surging again in the wake of a stunning industrial action by the ILA (East Coast Longshore union) honoring a Liverpool dockers' picket in New Jersey. Real international dockers solidarity had been reawakened and the demoralizing isolation broken...

"Since the ITF's Flag of Convenience (FOC) Campaign, which seeks to organize exploited third world seamen... is based largely on support of the dockers unions, it seemed only natural that the Liverpool dockers should be given an opportunity to address the inspectors regarding their strike... Why did ITF heads resist offering the Liverpool dockers a forum? Was it fear they would send a bunch of hooligans who would tear up their new headquarters building, as was preposterously argued? Or was it a continued attempt to isolate the militant dockers? As consensus amongst inspectors mushroomed to give a platform for the dockers, ITF heads acquiesced... It was one of the most well-attended and well-received of all the week's sessions...

"Speaker after speaker took the deck to laud this courageous struggle. Most impassioned was Thulani Dlimani, the TGWU representative from South Africa, who remembered well the Liverpool dockers' solidarity actions during the bloody anti-apartheid struggle... A unanimous vote of support was acknowledged in a glowing letter from Marges to the Liverpool dockers, "call-

continued on page 8

Irish workers fight back

The last few months have witnessed the level of industrial action jumping from virtually none to disputes erupting in An Post, Eircell, Trinity College and the civil service. The government has asked the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to get their members into line, i.e. to ensure no more disputes arise. Butt the current round of industrial action is not about to quickly fade away.

That the Government can talk to the ICTU leaders as friends is indicative of the cosy relationship which has come about over the last ten years. There has now been a decade of "social partnership" agreements with the trade union leaders. 'Our rulers' in the Dail expect unions to police their own members, i.e. to discourage disputes and encourage the members to leave it up to the full-time negotiators to hammer out a "good deal" for them every three years. This policy, however, does not extend to saving jobs as the former workers from TEAM Aer Lingus, Digital (Galway), Waterford Glass, or Packard can tell you.

These national agreements see the unions enter into negotiations with the government and employers, usually complete with staged 'breakdowns' and threatened withdrawals. Then a programme arises ensuring that pay rises are kept to a minimum in return for some – mostly ignored – promises about job creation, social welfare, taxation, etc. The reality of these schemes is that they put severe limits on what workers can look for but place absolutely no limits on what employers can demand from workers.

The highly restrictive Industrial Relations Act has led to a virtual decommissioning of the most powerful weapon open to any organised workforce, the strike. Under the Act seven day's strike notice has to be served on the employer before any action is taken, which allows time to recruit strike-breakers or to move production elsewhere.

Furthermore it is illegal to have a dispute over one person's rights without first going through months of procedures. So if a shop steward is sacked you can't walk off the job without the risk of the union or even individual strikers being sued On top of all this, the social aspect of each agreement has been ignored. The unemployed, the great lost tribe of our time, has largely remained forgotten.

Ireland has one of the largest levels of long-term unemployment in Europe. This is despite corporate profits well in excess of European averages. All of this is adding to a rising discontentment by Irish workers.

Despite all this, union membership continues to grow. The Irish Nurses Organisation grew by 3,000 in April and May as it looked like they were heading towards a dispute with the government. The shop workers union experienced a rise in membership as a result of the strike at Dunnes Stores. Far from frightening off workers, as some union officials claim, a fight to improve wages and conditions puts heart into people and encourages them to join a union.

52 percent of the entire Irish workforce is in a trade union. This is the one of the highest percentages in Europe. Small battles are being won all the time, despite the national agreements and all that goes with them. Workers have not forgotten how to fight or what their rights should be. The battles will continue.

But another fight will be within the unions as members struggle to gain control over their own struggles. It will have to be wrested from a bureaucracy that has tightened its grip on the reins of power over the last ten years. The union movement has to be brought back to fighting for the rights of workers rather than watching the ICTU throwing them away over a negotiation table.

— Dermot Sreenan

Solidarity with McDonald's workers

October 12, the fourth anniversary of the death by electrocution of McDonald's worker Mark Hopkins, was a day of solidarity with McDonald's workers. The McLibel defendants began closing arguments Oct. 21st in McDonald's long-running libel trial stemming from leaflets distributed by members of London Greenpeace.

Protests at McDonalds around the UK marked the fourth anniversary of Hopkins' death at McDonald's Arndale store in Manchester. During the McLibel Trial, McDonald's UK Safety Officer was challenged over a previously confidential internal report into his death. The report catalogued a number of company failures, and made the damning conclusion: "Safety is not seen as being important at store level."

More than 50 people attended the picket of McDonald's in Market Street, Manchester. One demonstrator stood by the door to the store shouting about the poor pay and working conditions, about Mark's death, McDonald's hostility to trade unions, and the McLibel case. The normally busy store never got more than half full. After a couple of hours, demonstrators marched to the store where Mark was killed. McDonald's managers formed a line in front of the store but Maureen Hopkins, Mark's mother, walked past them and laid her wreath of 21 red roses. Lots of customers started asking questions, and many left the store in sympathy with her and disgust at McDonald's.

Many McDonald's around London were leafletted as well. One person, dressed as a McDonald's worker, was chained to a large mock-up burger, symbolising McDonald's exploitation of workers.

"I want every McDonald's worker to stand up for their rights, which is why I am backing this support campaign 100 percent. In this way, Mark's death will not have been in vain." – Maureen Hopkins

Protests occurred at McDonald's outlets around the world Oct. 16th, with many people handing out "What's Wrong With McDonald's?" or similar leaflets. There was leafletting and protests outside 250 of McDonald's UK stores. Many stores McDonald's workers were handed leaflets expressing opposition to low pay and exploitation, and offering solidarity and encouragement to organise for their rights. And thousands of special leaflets for kids were distributed for the first time.

Approximately two million "What's Wrong With McDonald's?" leaflets have so far been handed out in the UK since the libel writs were served on the McLibel Two. McDonald's attempt to suppress freedom of speech has completely backfired.

The day was marked in Japan with the appearance of two clowns in the heart of Tokyo. The clowns, definitely no friends of arch-fiend Ronald McDonald, entertained shoppers and revellers in the Shinjuku area during the evening. Along the way they paid visits to two McDonalds stores, presenting patrons with Japanese pamphlets outlining the case against McDonalds and the trial of the McLibel Two.